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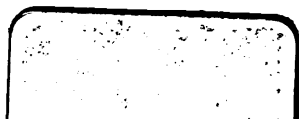
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PULPIT OUTLINES.

PULPIT OUTLINES.

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY

SKETCHES OF SERMONS

PREACHED TO

EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONS.

WITH AN ESSAY ON EFFECTIVE PREACHING.

BY PROFESSOR SHEPARD.



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PREFACE.

THE leading points of a good discourse have often proved useful in directing the meditations of the private Christian, and in assisting the preacher of the gospel to project and arrange his subjects.

There are few preachers who are at all times capable of fixing their attention upon a single topic; the very affluence of a man's ideas and mental associations may serve to increase his occasional distraction, and render some such humble manual as this most welcome. His eye, even when running over the texts, may find a place of repose, and, in perusing the course of thought connected with any one of them, another and perhaps far superior treatment may occur to his mind; so that the discourse which he produces although suggested by what he had there read, may have scarcely a single idea in common with it.

The first edition of this work has in the present been, it is trusted, much improved, by the introduction of a greater variety of topics, and the extension of the number of "Sketches" to one hundred and twenty.

February, 1852.

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THE EFFECTIVE PREACHER.

BY PROFESSOR SHEPARD.

OF Paul and Barnabas it is said, when labouring in Iconium in a synagogue of the Jews, that they "so spake that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed." They preached effectively. Their style as preachers, as well as their spirit, had much to do with the result. The same remark holds good with respect to all preachers. Much, every where and at all times, depends upon the man, intellectually and prudentially, as well as spiritually. This sentiment is sustained, not only by what we read in the word of God, but also by what we see in his providence,—in his actual withholding or dispensing success. We discover that certain men have been distinguished for success. We are prepared to say, that it was not altogether because they possessed more piety, or exhibited more truth, than some others who have been less successful. It was, in part, because they were more skilful in presenting the truth. They drew attention to it; they produced conviction by it. The Spirit brought many home to God.

Let it here be distinctly and strongly averred, that no fitness or skill in the presentation will avail to a saving result, unless the Holy Ghost accompanies and gives efficiency to the word. Gabriel may preach with the eloquence of an angel, through his whole immortality, and without the Spirit not a conversion would be effected. While we say this with the utmost strength and sincerity, we repeat the sentiment, that very much depends in the securing of success, upon the preacher's skill. Indeed, facts on every hand admonish us, to study the art of preaching with the utmost intentness. Skill in this work, seems to be almost as important as if skill were the efficient power.

It is proposed in this article, in the first place, to point out some of the characteristics of the truly skilful and effective preacher.

Preparatory to designating some of the prominent elements of the effective preacher, it may be premised, that by the phrase is not meant one who, by mere pleasantness of voice and elegance of style and address, can captivate a luxurious and accomplished auditory; but one who can reach and stir the conscience of such an auditory; who can plant arrows in refined, as well as rustic hearts;—one, in short, who can convince, agitate, and persuade men in all their states of tenderness and obduracy, roughness and culture.

It is indispensable that the preacher understand, 1. The material he is to work with, namely—truth, in its vast and various relations; 2. The material he is to work upon, that is—man, in his complex and mysterious attributes.

The effective preacher, then, is a clear and sound theologian. He has a thorough theoretic knowledge of the whole field of religious doctrine. The properties of the Divine nature, the principles of the Divine administration, the mysterious method of mercy by the cross, the grounds of obligation and of duty, lie familiarly in the mind, and are employed as the basis, the fundamental requisite, in all efficient preaching. A minister may, if he chooses, confine himself to the utterance of more prudential considerations,—to the exposition and pressure of the code of a secular morality; a brief experiment, however, will satisfy him, that his words all go to the winds. He may do more;—he may declaim fervently and move the passions; he may astonish the people by his soarings upward and outward upon eternity and immensity;—if his sentiments and sentences are the creation of his own fancy, the feelings enkindled by them, and the goodness produced, will pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew. The reason is, he has not used the instrument which God has put into the hands of his ministers, for the purpose of accomplishing the glorious things he has ordained. That instrument is truth, the sword which the Spirit employs in all his searching operations. When wielded with sure aim, it will at first be painful; but, in the end, it will achieve benignant results. In order to be thus wielded, it must be understood. When rightly understood and appreciated, it will be significantly employed. The clear, comprehensive theologian will throw out truth in luminous and heavy masses. His messages will go forth with authority, because they are made up, not of the pretty and sweet things of man's invention, but of the solid and immense things of God's revealing. He preaches all truth; even the points the world called inexplicable, and stumbled against, and quarrelled with. They being in the Bible, he puts them into his sermons; and though by multitudes they are dreaded, and most hostilely regarded,

they sometimes break very hard hearts, and bring down very high looks.

Not only all truth, but truth in its harmony and just proportions, will be presented, when there is this clear view of the whole field ;—not an inordinate prominence and pressing of favourite points ; not a clashing and warring of points ; but every position having its true relative importance, and every single position coinciding, dwelling in love, with every other position. Nothing can be more fatal to a preacher's influence and success, than through ignorance, or narrow and distorted views of doctrine, to have parts of the same discourse, or different discourses in the same vicinity, standing to each other in a belligerent attitude. One paragraph undoes the impression of another. One sermon nullifies another. The hearer looks on in amazement and confusion, and resolves to put off his reconciliation with God till the preacher becomes better reconciled with himself.

Again ; in a clear, broad view of truth, its greatness and majesty are seen, and an inspiring confidence in its efficacy is awakened and sustained. The preacher of this sort, who grasps truth in its amplitude, and sees it in its high authority, has no misgivings from this source, when he stands up in its advocacy ; no apologies to make in preface of his appeals. He utters his message in freeness and fervour, with the belief that there is an importance, a dignity, a worth attached to it, which the most reckless must respect ; and a power inherent, which the most obdurate must feel. His deep-felt confidence in his weapon, his bold relief of doctrine, does often arrest attention, and by the Spirit's aid subdue the heart, when a doubtful and flattering utterance would have been met with the most vacant indifference, if not with positive scorn.

Knowledge is power ; truth is power. The preacher has power, other things being equal, just in proportion to the amount of truth he has compassed and brought under the mastery of his faculties, so that he can use it at pleasure, for conviction, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

Let it here be added, that we speak of truth, not merely as lodged in the head, but lodged and living in the heart. The effective preacher has not simply clear theoretic knowledge ; he has especially a deep experimental knowledge of the grand system of doctrine. It has all been authenticated in the conflicts and triumphs of his own breast. He speaks what he does know ; he testifies what he has seen and felt. He *must* so speak, if he would speak with effect. If he *does* so speak, it will be with effect ; even though, in other respects, his talents and acqui-

tions be of a secondary order; for he is prepared to give graphic and vivid pictures, instead of dry, dead abstractions. Indeed, with the scenes of his past history fresh in his mind, he cannot help giving such pictures. Speaking of sin as one who has tasted its bitter fruits, and been chained to its detested loathsomeness; of repentance, as one who has bled beneath its anguish, and been blest with its peace; of faith, as one who has been favoured with its visions; of love, as one who has kindled and exulted with its flame; of heaven, as one who has foretasted its joys; of hell, as one who has looked into its caverns of wrath and woe,—he must speak with an accuracy, a strength, a fulness, and descriptiveness of meaning, which gives glowing reality to all he touches, and body and power to all he presents. Such a man does not make a sermon, simply because the hour is coming when it will be convenient for him to have a sermon; but because his heart is full of something to say; because it is heaving and glowing with indwelling masses of the vivid material. He cannot refrain and be comfortably at rest; for the material accumulates; the mass still enlarges and glows; the fire kindles and burns in his frame; so that he is compelled to pour forth the swelling and struggling contents.

The sermons of the effective preacher are taken especially out of the heart, as all good sermons must be. The effective preacher having a heart of varied and profound experience, every weapon of truth has tried its temper there; and there he goes for his weapons. Truth may be taken from the head, but it must be carried *through the heart*, before it is imbued with the spirit and with power. The preacher who has not felt and lived his materials, but who gleans them from every exterior quarter, and of course takes them on trust, will find them often devoid of interest or efficacy. If he picks up arrows which others have thrown, they will frequently prove to be blunted arrows. But if he makes his own breast a laboratory, and there casts and shapes, points and bur-nishes his weapons, he will be far more likely to have those which will do the work intended. Heart answers to heart, heart swallows up the product of heart. It feels what comes from this fountain of feeling. Hence the power of experience: and the necessity, that the preacher who would have power, be a man of experience,—one who has not merely seen the majestic body of truth, but has undergone its trans-forming spirit. He must unite these two things; theoretic knowledge of the truth, and thorough experience of it. In other words, a clear head, and a warm and active heart. No matter how clear the head, if the heart is only warm; no matter how warm the heart, if the head is only clear.

This leads us to say, that *strong logical acumen*, and *great power of feeling* combined, are requisite to ensure convincing and effective speaking. These are often found apart, not so often found together. There are many who have one finely developed and vigorous faculty; and if they only had another and contrasted faculty, to be joined as a true yokefellow to the one they have, they would be very strong men. Here is a preacher who is very warm-hearted. His soul is full of benevolent emotion. But he cannot move five minutes in a consecutive train of thought. There is power; but there is wanting a chain to conduct it from the source to the object. Another is very lucid, very logical; but has no passion, no emotion. He proves his point with sunlight certainty; but the conviction effected is chilly and unproductive. He shows demonstratively, that the sinner should repent; that he has power to comply with the requirement of God. The transgressor is satisfied that it is so; he sees the truth, bows a full unhesitating assent, and moves deliberately on to death. Logic alone will make the sinner see that he ought to repent; logic, joined with pure and fervid emotion, will make him *feel* that he *must* repent. These two together, the reasoning power and the feeling power, will elaborate luminous and burning appeals. You have a preacher who can prove a point and press it,—who can hold up truth convincingly before the mind, or deeply sink it into the hidden recesses of the heart. His passion vivifies his logic; his logic guides and concentrates his passion.

Thus far I have spoken of knowledge doctrinal and experimental,—of the power of reasoning, and the power of feeling, as elements in the truly effective preacher.

In proceeding with our estimate, we may not omit *practical talent*. Perhaps it is better to call it *practical intent*, or the purpose of doing something on the souls of men when we speak, and the skill to do it. It is very important that there be both the intention and the tact. Indeed they are indispensable to a truly productive power. There are men who make admirable sermons: as specimens of reasoning they are conclusive; in style and structure they are splendid. On hearing one of these sermons, all admit it was a noble production. But it failed to do the appropriate work of a sermon. It aroused no dormant conscience; it reached and troubled no obdurate heart; because the preacher did not mean to do any such thing. His object was not present, redeeming effect. Such is the object of the preacher, whose outline I am trying to give. He is always a man of definite, pointed intention. If he preaches doctrine, it is for its enlightening and sanctifying power, and for the duty which grows out of it. If he preaches duty, it is that he may induce men to do it.

His purpose before ignorant men, is to instruct them; before careless men, to awaken them; before sceptical men, to convince them; before the obdurate, to melt them down; in short, to urge if possible every unsheltered soul to the refuge by God provided. If he has accomplished none of these points, he feels that he has done but little. He cannot be satisfied with the idea, that he is casting seed which will germinate in other centuries. He cannot console himself with the wonders which may spring from his labours ages after he is dead. His purpose—a purpose his heart has grasped—is, by the grace of God, to accomplish something in the very effort and in every effort.

But the preacher may have an object, and err in the way of reaching it. He may intend to plant the fire of truth in those already inflamed consciences, and yet not know how to do it. The preacher, to be effective, must have the peculiar, and, it may be added, rare kind of skill demanded for this thing. He must know the human mind, not merely as learned in books, but as read in the field, the street, the shop, the mart, on the ocean. He must know the common mind, in its variety, its measure of knowledge, its mode of reasoning, its springs of feeling and action; otherwise, he will reason without producing any conviction, and in his most fervid appeals he will awaken not a particle of emotion. All well enough, it may be, for another order of beings, but not in the least suited to the beings the preacher has before him. The whole elaborate and masterly production goes completely over the heads to be enlightened, and the hearts to be affected. In order to any practical effect on common minds, the preacher must consent to keep down where such minds live and move and have their being. He must consent to think and feel as they do. They are men of this world, on probation for another; and so is he. It is very unfortunate for him to forget that he is a sublunary being, and that he addresses sublunary beings. Some do forget this most egregiously. The moment they begin to move they rise aloft. They leave the regions of business and real life, and mount up to the domain of balloons; and sometimes we are compelled to infer it is for the same reason,—because they are inflated. When men, living, active, tempted men, are understood and aimed at, the appeal will very likely be a simple, direct, unpretending appeal. The strength will be expended on the object, not wasted in the air. The truths and illustrations employed, will be the very truths and illustrations demanded by the peculiarities of the case. A good aim, the right weapon, an elastic sinew, will ensure an effect. But no matter what the power, or the purpose of the preacher, if he seizes upon an unfitting truth, he will probably accomplish nothing by his effort.

A nice selective talent, then, is of great value to the preacher. Whoever

has it, has one of the best elements of power. The kind of preacher we are considering has it. He knows the persons before him; their natures and circumstances; and when thoughts and truths, arguments and appeals, come thronging in his mind, he almost instinctively takes out from the mass the precise matter which will do the work intended,—the matter which will most surely reach and affect the souls he has to deal with. He is appropriate; every sentence is in its place, and worthy of its place. The whole has a meaning for the minds in view. But the preacher who has not this niceness of discrimination and selection, who puts on his paper, or utters from his lips, every thing which comes into his head, loads his discourses with masses of so alien a character, that they cloud its meaning, and cover up its edge. He is clumsy, tedious, oppressive. Whereas, if he would only say the things he ought to say, and let the rest alone, he might be attractive, stirring and pungent. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Bad company is as fatal to the influence of a good idea, as of any thing else. A rich, opportune, robust thought, with a dozen abortions cleaving to it, is inevitably impeded in its work. It cannot move freely and boldly to the commissioned achievement. We say, then, take what is vigorous and fitting, and cast off the rest as an intrusion and an embarrassment, incomparably worse than nothing. The right truths, and only these, are wanted.

Power of application is another thing necessary to make the truly effective preacher. He may be pointed in his intention, select in his matter; but if he is not also actually pointed, urgent, significantly close in his appeal, he will assuredly fail of doing the good he ought to do. Here comes in a certain severity of feeling,—not rudeness, not rash recklessness. He, who is admitted to the most hallowed recesses of the heart, who has to do with its finest and noblest sensibilities, whose hand moves over chords which reach in their vibrations to other worlds and unending ages, should be a man of carefulness and delicacy. In one sense, he should tread lightly, and touch tenderly, where feelings and interests so intimate, sacred, and enduring, are concerned. But if his delicacy is so refined and fastidious, that he shrinks from touching at all; that he forbears to bring the truth in its authority and pungency upon the conscience,—he doubtless stands chargeable with a grand deficiency. It is often a morbid delicacy, and he must get rid of it, if he would do his Master's work on the souls of men. He must be willing occasionally to hurt the feelings of people. He must come sharply and roughly across men's hearts, and insert pangs there, which are keen as the probings of the surgeon's knife.

We should all like very well to be excused from this part of our office.

But the Lord Jesus will never excuse us. He insists upon having this work done. Until it is done, in some cases, little or nothing is done in the momentous business of saving souls from death.

We would have go together, this close, searching, truth-applying fidelity, and a wholesome delicacy of feeling. Then, while the preacher delivers his message clearly and strongly; while he goes with it into the heart, and lodges its goading stings in the conscience—he carefully abstains from all wanton and gratuitous severity. While he keeps back nothing either of reproof or alarm, while he uncovers the pit, and gives us visions of its ascending smoke, and audience of its anguished wailing, it is done in the spirit of love; not with a relish, as though he were in his element when ranging those regions of blackness and terror, and brandishing and hurling the bolts of perdition. It is done tenderly,—done reluctantly; but it must be done; and truth in its most awful, agitating aspect, held up plainly, and urged home faithfully. It is indispensable to efforts of power and results of redemption.

It has been implied all along, that the effective preacher speaks with a *very considerable plainness*. It is certain, that if his theology or his rhetoric, his doctrine or his language, have to go through an interpreter, they will get very much diluted on their way to men's hearts. He should speak not only so that he *may* be understood, but so that he cannot fail to be understood; indeed, so as to impel his meaning into the minds of his hearers.

It will not answer for him to be always very beautifully and exquisitely finished. Rounded periods rarely prick. I speak here of aiming at elegance as an end. Whoever sits down to make a very beautiful sermon, assuredly will make a useless one. Occasionally there comes forth such a sermon; elaborated most deliciously. Every sentence has a flower; every line has music: and every body is charmed. "He is to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; they hear his words, but they do them not." This is the character and end of all such preaching, splendid and powerless.

But there is another extreme; an absolute and arid plainness. The whole field which the preacher spreads before us, is without bloom, or greenness, or any such thing. The imagination is exorcised, as if it were an evil spirit, and all its product repudiated as rank abomination. Such a man makes a great mistake. He cannot reach a high point of efficiency. Certainly he cannot approach and enter the hearts of men, whilst he refuses to walk in the high way which God has opened to their hearts. The preacher must *use* the imagination; he must *address* the imagination. Men who have swayed and thrilled and melted the popular heart have done so. Whitefield, Edwards, Payson did so. There

are images which are the best arguments. There is an elegance which augments strength; there is a polish which touches the temper of the steel. The sword which hung at Eden's gate had the brightness of fire. Rhetorically, as well as literally, a blade may be burnished, and still have a terrible keenness of edge. A discourse may be ornate, and pierce to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow. The brightness draws the attention; the sharpness cuts the callous heart.

The effective preacher has this chastened elegance,—this polished plainness. With him ornament is a means used in powerful subservience to the great end of impression. It is not with labour drawn forth and heaped up; it is rather the spontaneous overflowing of a repressed fountain of beauty within. He writes and speaks as he does, because with the taste and sensibility he has, he could not write or speak differently. It is not a matter of rule, but of heartfelt, energetic sentiment. He dares to contravene the written precept, if that contravenes the better law which his own consciousness and good sense have enacted. He feels that he must move independently, or forfeit the effect which he might otherwise produce. It is impossible that he, or any one else, should be a man of power, while he is servilely a follower of other men's rules. His responsibility to the bar of the rhetorician, should be blotted from his mind by the overpowering conviction of his responsibility to the bar of God. Let him think and write, just as he is compelled to think and write, with an eye on eternal things, with a heart full of truth and love, with inextinguishable purpose, set upon the glory of God, and the redemption of men. No matter, if thoughts and illustrations break forth, different from any which ever occurred to him before. No matter, if they occasionally run into forms, different from any thing they ever assumed before. It is all well enough, provided they only lie together in a vigorous and compact body. It is better infinitely, than to be for ever saying the same old dull things, in the same old undeviating way. Let him yield to the urgencies of the awakened spirit within, when he has such a spirit, and speak freely and boldly, though he speak without a precedent, and it will not be feebly nor in vain. His hearers will not be likely to settle down to their slumbers while he has them in hand. They will hardly dare to sleep; for they never will be able to conjecture what things may be exploded on their organs before they wake up.

My remarks are not against rules. Such a course does not become me. They are only against a servile bondage to other men's rules, or to a particular, arbitrary set of rules. So used, they wither the waking energies of the mind. They are as chains on the feet, interdicting all strength and freedom of motion. The preacher cannot manfully do the

work of God with these shackles upon him. He cannot come up to the expectation of the good on earth, or of the blessed in heaven. He may sit down to write, and if he is thinking about Blair's rules, or any body's else, instead of bringing his mind in arousing contact with the great things of truth and eternity, the product will be something like Blair's sermons, finished, faultless; but, preached where and how you please absolutely powerless.

Let me here bring the parts together, that the subject of this discussion may be seen at one view.

The effective preacher is a man of extensive knowledge, not a novice. He has clear and comprehensive views of truth. His mind is filled with its illuminations. He is a man of deep experience; his heart is pervaded with the spirit and power of truth. He is a man of benevolence; his soul is filled with intense desires to achieve, by its instrumentality, those grand purposes of love, for which the truth was given. He is a man of logic and of feeling; he can prove his points and press them. He is a man of simplicity, who aims to be understood; a man of intention, who means to be felt. He clothes his message in garments of light, imbues it with the energies of emotion, adjusts it to the sensibilities of the heart; points and pours it into the drowsy chambers of the conscience. He is a man of taste; he can soar if he pleases;—if he pleases, he can write and speak with a winning beauty and a chastened elegance. He is a man of boldness; and is not afraid, in distinctness and strength, to utter the whole truth—all doctrine—all duty, whoever may hear, or whoever may forbear. He is a man of independence; his rules are his own, gathered from all proper sources, and incorporated with his habits of thought and feeling. He speaks in his own way, from the impulse of his own spirit, and in accordance with his own consciousness and good sense. He speaks not so much for beauty, as for effect. He likes beauty very well, but strength, impression, effect, more. We cannot but approve of his sentiments and course. If he is moving in power, and doing the work of God on the souls of men, we can forgive him, even though in the rush of emotion he chance to fall upon a figure or a word at which Quintilian would frown. If he has strength to lift up and move away mountains of difficulty, and to shiver rocks of obduracy, we will not insist upon his doing the work with absolute smoothness. Let him by all means do the work. The highest exertions of power are sometimes inconsistent with an exact and perfect finish. The sublime and resistless agents of nature are not accustomed to do things very precisely. The lightning does not stop to polish its shafts in its rending, scorching track.

It is not intended by these remarks, to encourage an uncultivated and

eccentric power. While we would knock off some encumbering shackles, and concede some liberties to the preacher, in his seasons of excited effort, by all means would we hold him under the dominion of law.

Before closing this article we subjoin a few remarks upon the cultivation and training of the sort of preacher which has been described. By what process does any one come to be a preacher of this sort?

We say very confidently, that no one becomes a truly effective preacher by accident, or, in these days, by inspiration. He becomes such by diligent labour and prolonged and inflexible intention. It is admitted that some have an original adaptedness to the work, beyond what others have. No one can doubt this who has heard of a Spencer and a Summerfield. But we stoutly deny, that any have become powerful and enduring preachers with no study and no training. Whatever be the gifts, there must be rigid discipline, or there will be ultimate failure. A preacher of sudden and light growth may corruscate and dazzle for a brief season—it is the meteor's brilliancy; it flashes and it is gone.

In all that has been said, it is implied that the effective preacher, in the best sense, is a solid man;—not a man of sound and show. There are firm and massive materials laid down, deep and strong, at the foundation of his character. It is well, if he has often encountered investigations which have brought into requisition his utmost depth, compass, and intensity of thinking. It is to his advantage, if he has grappled with the highest mysteries of mathematics, and threaded the involved mazes of metaphysics; not that he is to demonstrate doctrine by letters and lines; or, in his addresses to men, employ the process of the schools; but the reach, and vigour, and acuteness he may gain, will impart luminous certainty to his reasonings, and authoritative efficacy to his appeals. We wish it were universally impressed on the mind, that as a preparative to eloquence, in its high and enduring form, there must be a severe and intense intellectual training. Let every young man whose eye is resting on this height of distinction and usefulness, understand that he will not reach it by the broad, plain, easy road of acquisition which has been opened in modern times, but by the old-fashioned narrow path, ascending ruggedly, where toil will harden the tendons of the soul, and rocks and roots resist the upward progress. Sinews, which have done such work, when put under the pressure of a fervid spirit, will deal out heavy and effectual blows.

It is hardly necessary to add, after what has been said, that we would insist upon a very thorough and mature preparation for the theological seminary. Whoever abbreviates his academical studies through haste to be in the seminary and thence into the field, acts very unwisely, and

sooner or later will regret what he has done. To come out of the seminary a finished and strong man, one must enter it with powers and resources sufficient to enable him to avail himself of its advantages. It requires good habits of study previously formed, and the mastery of much language and science, to enable one to encounter successfully the profound and perplexing points of exegesis, and the high mysteries and severe abstractions of theology. The young man who enters with a marked deficiency in this preparatory regimen, will be doomed to go halting through the seminary, and halting through life. It is not to be expected, that he will go forth into the field a finished and strong man, there to command the respect, and achieve the results of the effective preacher.

Many fail of the desired attainments in their theological course, by their loose and vagrant style of study. They emasculate instead of strengthening their minds. It is indispensable to the right species of improvement and growth in education, that the attention be prominently given to the great subjects of study and investigation which lie in the prescribed course; the labour, the toil, the intense tasking of the mind should be on these.

The great object of education, theological as well as classical, is discipline; not first the storing of the mind, but the discipline of it; not so much the *product* of thinking, as the *power* of thinking. This power can be attained only by close, rigid, continued and connected thinking. Let the mind be held sternly to the subject or pursuit regularly before it. It may come reluctantly; compel it to come. It may struggle to fly off to more congenial pursuits. Let it be held, during the season of study, to the subject of study, as with "links of iron." One hour thus fixedly employed, is worth more for the great purpose of study, the discipline of the mind, the acquiring of the power of attention, than five hours of loose and intermittent thought.

This fixedness of attention, augmenting the power of attention and of thought, ensures profoundness and accuracy of knowledge. And clearness and accuracy of views are invaluable to the preacher. The attainment of these should never be lost sight of in his training. A small range of knowledge, where it is thorough, distinct, absolutely and finally mastered, is far better, for all the purposes of knowledge, to the theologian, than a much wider range, with hesitancy and confusion on every section of his field.

The reading of the theological student and the preacher, we think, should be conducted with special reference to the discipline of the mind and the accuracy of its knowledge. Much progress in these respects

may be made by reading, or none at all, according as it is conducted. If it is a restless, unsettled, indiscriminate style of reading, a skimming over of every book the individual can lay his hand on, it will be but little conducive to those habits which are needed in the work of the ministry. There are those who, in their course of education, are great readers; they read many things, almost every thing. The material is laid in, all in a heap; and it remains without any order or classification. They clog and oppress their faculties. In the odd but expressive language of Robert Hall, "they pile so many books on their heads, their brains cannot move."

To effect the discipline requisite for the clear and strong preacher, his reading should be limited, select, and thorough. It has been well remarked, "that the true student never considers how *much* he reads, but rather how *little*, and only *what* and *how* he reads." Pliny's advice is to the same effect: "Multum, non multa." A few books of the right sort, are better than more. The great standard works, patiently and firmly put together by the original and massive thinkers of their respective times, authorities and classics in their kind, these are what the student wants—these properly regarded will assuredly *make* him. The right book is the book that will not only feed but stir the mind—the book that will not only convey thought, but compel thinking. Such a book is slow reading, if read with any intentness, on account of the thinking it will compel. It is profitable reading, however, for it will make strong by its bracing spirit, rich by its indicated stores, disciplined by its 'iron-linked' logic, excursive by its generous impulses.

From the few good books it is well to select some *one*, the best as near as we can judge, and let that be our ever present and very special friend. There is an old Latin maxim recovered by the author of the *Curiosities of Literature*, "Be cautious of the man of one book;" for, "whoever has long been intimate with one great author will always be found to be a formidable antagonist." Demosthenes was a man of one book; that book was Thucydides, which he read and re-read—copied and re-copied, till he obtained a similar closeness and force of thought and diction. Chatham was a man of one book, and that favourite was the *Sermons of Barrow*. A distinguished minister of the American church, who repeatedly read "Edwards on the Will," testifies, "that he is more indebted to that work than all other human productions." The *Analogy of Butler*, adopted as the favourite, read with numerous and careful repetitions, has been the making of more than one minister. It is "a work, carefully and closely packed up out of twenty years' hard thinking." It is absolutely perfect in its kind, resistless in argument, unimprovable

in language, altogether unchangeable, indestructible, more solid throughout than the masonry of the pyramids. The reading of such books in the right way, will certainly conduce to very cogent and conclusive thinking, and very effective preaching.

In connexion with this range and style of reading, there should be the practice of writing, after the same noble and perfected models. The style and power of writing necessary in the effective preacher can be attained only by the practice of writing; in every effort raising high the standard, and pressing up to the most arduous point of excellence. Writing as well as reading, especially in the forming period, should be slow, condensed, elaborate. Some of the first sermons of a young man may, with advantage, receive the thought and labour of weeks, and even of months, instead of days.

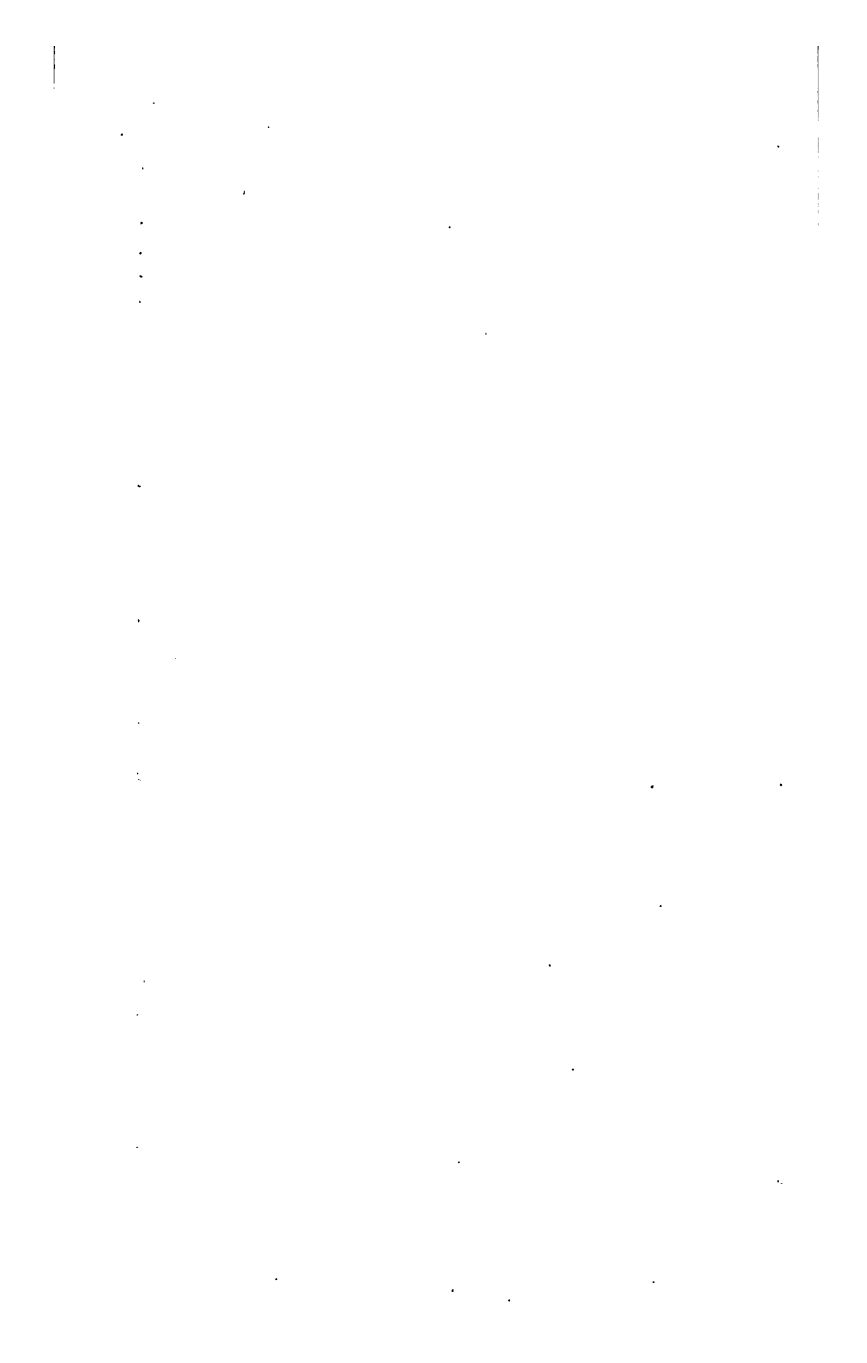
There is another practice, which may not be omitted, in the training of the truly able and effective preacher, namely, the practice of extemporaneous speaking. That the ability to preach without writing in full, is a valuable one in the minister, is generally admitted. Still we do not believe, that it would, on the whole, be an advantage to have all preaching done without writing. The most effective orators in the world have been in the habit of writing some portions of their appeals. It is a fact that many of the most cogent and eloquent discourses, the most intense, pointed, overwhelming paragraphs that have gone forth from human lips, were carefully and fully written. Demosthenes and Cicero were both very elaborate writers of their spoken matter. The masterly and almost astounding peroration of Brougham's plea in behalf of Queen Caroline, it is said, on the authority of an eloquent English gentleman, was written fifteen several times. It is true that a sermon, as well as any other sort of address, may be written, and at the same time be warm, simple, direct, attractive, and effective to the highest degree. By no means, then, would we have the preacher abandon the pen. If he does so entirely, we do not believe that he can continue to be for a long time, and in the best sense, an effective preacher. But whilst he cultivates the power of writing, he should also cultivate the power of extemporaneous address. Facility and force in this species of address, can be attained only by practice; and the practice should commence early, and be assiduously continued. The mind should be very resolutely made up both to the effort and to the exposure. A little hardihood may be assumed to advantage: "Come what will, I will make the attempt, will persist, will speak and preach extemporaneously. If I fail in some of my efforts, it will not be the worst thing that ever happened." By thus doing the thing resolutely and courage-

ously, the preacher of disciplined powers will come to utter truth extemporaneously with propriety and effect. He will attain to more influence than he would otherwise have.

The manner also is to be cultivated, the voice, attitude, action, expression. There is great power in these. Whitefield may be adduced as an illustration of the wonderful power of manner. He studied manner till he became a perfect master of it. In most cases, if not all, assiduous cultivation and practice are necessary to secure a significant and forcible manner. Yet most seem to think, that the power of address, if it comes at all, must come without labour—come spontaneously. If God intended that any should be orators, he caused them to be born orators; a perverse and wilful error, persisted in against nearly all the gathered light and remonstrance of past and present examples. All the finished and potent speakers of ancient time became such by an attention to the manner, a toil in practice, which ended only with life; and still we will have it, that we can perform successfully all the high functions of the orator on the most thrilling and momentous themes, with the untutored voice, and the clumsy joints, and the unpractised limbs of nature, corrupted and made worse by that second nature, early habit. It is by this heedless, lazy throwing of this whole great concern on the drifting tide of chance, that we come so far short in the use of one of the mightiest means of influence and of good of which God has made us capable. It is indispensable that there be in the candidate for the ministry, a zealous study of this thing, an incessant drilling and exposure, if he would arrest attention to, and make effective on the heart, the matter he prepares.

But valuable as these outward accomplishments are, the internal are far more so. Especially must the heart be cultivated; and let the teacher there be the purifying, enkindling, elevating Spirit of God. Out of a great, warm, illumined heart comes the best eloquence, the most arresting and subduing, the world ever hears.

Prayer, as a means to the attainment in question, should be very prominent. It gives clearness to the understanding, and strength and pureness to emotion; it quickens thought, and vivifies the gathered and otherwise dead material. Sometimes it lifts the soul to the transfiguring mount, where the enlightened vision reaches to the grand interests and the glorified objects of unseen worlds. Let the preacher be eminently a man of prayer, and grace will be poured into his lips, and he will have the eloquence of the truth and the love and the Spirit of God.



SKETCHES OF SERMONS.

I.

THE FALL AND RECOVERY OF MAN.

GENESIS III. 15—19.—“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed,” &c.

In the garden of paradise were placed the tree of life, an emblem and pledge of immortality, and the “tree of knowledge of good and evil,” to serve as a test of obedience. When Adam was placed therein, he was permitted to eat of every tree of the garden, excepting of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil.” In our text we have,

I. SOME IMPORTANT TRANSACTIONS RELATED.

Let us refer,

1. *To the transgression which had been committed.*

In the brief history that precedes the text, we are informed of the mode which Satan adopted to ensure the ruin of man. He began upon Eve, who, it is probable, was but newly created; and the better to accomplish his object, he assumed the form of a serpent, that the apparent miraculous effects upon himself of this wonderful fruit might serve to lull her suspicions. He succeeded;—Eve followed the example set her, and became tempter to her husband, “and he did eat.” In this transgression there were disbelief of the Creator; rebellion against his authority; the most criminal ambition; the basest ingratitude; and—in the ruin of his posterity—the utmost cruelty.

2. *The scrutiny instituted.*

Not long after the committal of this transgression, emotions of terror filled the breasts of the guilty pair, for they heard “the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden.” What a contrast betwixt their former and their present conduct; then his voice was hailed with gladness—now it is heard with fear—they hid themselves! Soon the voice commands their presence, and then the scrutiny commences. Denial is impossible, yet the confession

is not ingenuous; by an audacious insinuation the man attempts to throw the blame upon the Creator.

3. *The sentence pronounced.*

The ground henceforth is to be sterile, thorns and thistles are to be its spontaneous productions, and the food which is necessary to life, is to be obtained by hard toil. The body is eventually to return to its parent dust.

II. THE GRACIOUS INTIMATIONS OF THE TEXT.

1. *Intimations of mercy.*

The curse pronounced on the serpent, was the signal of mercy; the curse on the earth was another; the lengthening of life, though a life of toil, was another; but the promise of a Saviour was the crowning of the whole.

2. *Of the mode of recovery.*

He who was to be the deliverer was to be a partaker of human nature. In effecting the deliverance, it is intimated that suffering would be employed, and that a contest would take place between the prince of darkness and the deliverer, in which the former would be entirely discomfited, all his plans rendered abortive, all his schemes defeated, and his empire entirely destroyed. "His head"—standing for his mind, contrivances, plans, schemes, and designs—shall be bruised.

By way of improvement let us learn,

1. *Our causes of thankfulness.*

Though our earth is under a curse, yet how much of beauty and fertility remain? Though man is doomed to toil, yet this itself is rendered a blessing, and, by the arrangement of God, is not only conducive, but necessary, to health and life. Then we have cause for thankfulness in that display of redeeming love which has been made to us, in providing a Saviour every way qualified, and through whom we may receive richer blessings than we lost in Adam.

2. *Occasions for fear.*

There is sufficient of actual curse in the world to make us certain that the threatenings of God will be inflicted, if we do not avail ourselves of his promises.

II.

EXPULSION FROM PARADISE.

GEN. iii. 24.—"So he drove out the man."

The apostasy of man from God is that truth which lies at the foundation of revealed religion. If this be denied, there remains no way of accounting for the statements or design of the book of God. Without it, our present condition is inexplicable—with it, all

mystery is cleared up, and we are enabled to "justify the ways of God to men." In our text, the immediate result of this apostasy is brought before us.

I. THE LOSS SUSTAINED.

The place from which he was driven was the garden of paradise, the place which had been fitted up for the residence of holy and happy beings. We may form some idea of this loss by considering that in losing Eden—

1. *He lost all that was calculated to afford pleasure there.*

This garden had been laid out by God himself. The scenery, in all its loveliness; the rivers, in all their majesty; the trees, in all their luxuriance; the fruit, in all its richness and variety, were formed and disposed by his hand.

2. *He lost the delightful occupation that he would otherwise have enjoyed.*

He was placed in the garden to dress and keep it; in doing which there was labour without toil, effort without fatigue. While here, he had opportunities of learning of God and his ways—of studying his character in his works. That this formed no inconsiderable a portion of his employment, if we do but consider the names which he gave to the various animals—so descriptive of the nature and character of each—will be evident.

3. *He lost its exalted companionship.*

It is probable that he had had converse with those beings who at his creation sang together, shouting for joy. They were in after ages employed on messages of mercy to him, so that it is not improbable that they were his frequent visitors while he retained his innocence; but let this be as it may, he held converse with his God, who treated him as a familiar friend.

II. THE OCCASION OF IT.

1. *The act of disobedience of which Adam was guilty was the sole reason of this exclusion.*

On this, as on every other subject, the Scriptures are consistent. In the chapter before us, when God is uttering the sentence of condemnation, he says, "Because thou hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake." "By one man," says the apostle, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin."

2. *The act of disobedience was one of aggravated criminality.*

The prohibition of the tree of knowledge was designed as a test of obedience, in itself most lenient, considering the advantages which were enjoyed. In thus disobeying God, there were the foulest ingratitude, the most horrible impiety—for the word of the creature was believed in preference to the word of the Creator; self-murder—of the worst character, even the murder of the soul, combined with the most outrageous rebellion.

III. PROVISION FOR HIS GRACIOUS RESTORATION.

"So he drove out the man." Taking the term "so" in con-

nexion with the context, we think that he was driven out that a *way of restoration* might be taught him. This was done by figurative representation; the sword of flame, and guarding cherubim were intended to teach, that although transgression had blocked up the way to the tree of life, yet a way of access to it, exhibiting the wisdom, power, love, patience, and glory of Jehovah, would be displayed.

C

III.

THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION EXHIBITED AT EDEN.

GENESIS iii. 24.—“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”—The subject-matter of these revelations has been always the same, has always referred to the way of reconciliation with God. That way has always been one; there never was, there never could be, but one way of being reconciled to God. The only difference in any age has been in the clearness of the representation—in the degree of knowledge which has been possessed respecting it. By some it has been thought that the plan of redemption began to be unfolded in Eden, in that symbolical appearance recorded in our text, receiving, as time rolled on, fuller development and additional illustration, until it was clearly set forth in the Saviour’s mission, when “life and immortality,” in the way of their attainment, were fully “brought to light.”

I. THE EVENT HERE RECORDED.

The expulsion of man from paradise is that event to which our attention is directed in the text. Concerning it we may observe,

1. *That it was not forcible.*

The wording of the sentence would certainly lead us to infer the contrary, but we can scarcely suppose that the unwillingness of Adam to leave Eden would manifest itself in rebellious opposition, so as to induce coercive measures; besides, we may infer from the entire narrative, that he had been brought by this time into a state of true penitence.

2. *Neither are we to suppose that this event occurred merely as a carrying out of the curse which had been pronounced.*

The sin of Adam no doubt was the ground of this exclusion, but the principal reason was, that access to the tree of life might be denied to him. The appointment of God had connected the eating of the fruit of this tree with the possession of eternal life,

his right to which had been forfeited. By his exclusion from this tree, he was taught the full extent of the consequences of his transgression. It being, however, the purpose of God to restore him to that which he had forfeited, he expelled him from direct access to the tree, that he might by figurative representation show him how his title to eternal life was to be restored.

II. THE TRANSACTION WHICH FOLLOWED.

"And he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way." The general mind associates with this statement the idea of wrath; the popular notion being, that an angel with a flaming sword in his hand, stood in the entrance of Eden, to prevent any approach to the tree of life. That such cannot be its import might be inferred from the general tenor of the narrative; in several instances, while Adam was yet *in the garden*, the mercy of God was especially manifested, and we cannot suppose that, *after* his exclusion, there would be *less* mercy exhibited.

To us it appears that this transaction had for its object the illustration of the promise of the Redeemer, given just before,—a promise which would no doubt be much revolved in the mind of Adam.

1. *What is the Scripture signification of the term "Cherubim?"*

In the first chapter of Ezekiel we have an interesting vision of the living creatures described, in which the following particulars are worthy of notice. There was a flame of fire; the living creatures were in the midst of the fire; the general appearance of the living creatures was the "likeness of man;" and the Lord in the "appearance of a man" was with it. Repetitions of this vision are recorded in the third, eighth, and tenth chapters. The tenth chapter contains a fuller description of the "living creature," which closes with this remarkable passage, "This is the living creature which I saw *under the God of Israel* by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were *the Cherubim*." From which may we not conclude that the Cherubim of paradise were the same with the Cherubim of Ezekiel's vision? Would it not render correct interpretation of the Scriptures impossible, if it were once conceded that one term described more than one thing? In our text, in Ezekiel, and in all the passages which refer to the subject, we have the idea that God dwelt with the Cherubim; we are also told that the appearance of the Cherubim was that of a man; so that one great truth taught at Eden might be, that the seed of the woman, who would open the way to the tree of life, would be God dwelling with the flesh.

2. *What was the flaming sword?*

Critics tell us that the word rendered "flaming sword," might be rendered the "fire of wrath." Allow that the institution at Eden and the vision of Ezekiel represent the *same appearance*, and we have a key to the expression "flaming sword." In the vision of Ezekiel there was a fire enfolding, or turning back upon

itself: and the living creatures, with the likeness of a man, were in the midst of the fire. In the text, the sword of flame is said to have turned every way, but this would be better rendered "turning back on itself;" so that the great truth here taught was, that the fire of wrath, which had been kindled by transgression, instead of burning out to consume man, would turn back and expend itself on "*God manifest in the flesh.*"

III. THE DESIGN OF THIS TRANSACTION.

1. One great end was, to teach the principles of redemption.
2. Another was, to keep the divinely appointed way to eternal life in remembrance.
3. A third was, that it might serve as a temple of worship. It was to this "presence of the Lord," that the antediluvian patriarchs came—from which Cain was driven. Here sacrifices were offered, as expressions of faith in this way of reconciliation.

W.

IV.

ENOCH'S CHARACTER AND TRANSLATION.

GENESIS v. 24.—"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

Examples of eminent piety in the midst of abounding profligacy and impiety are to be the more prized, as they are so rarely to be met with. The period at which Enoch lived was one of those times, and he himself presents us with one of those examples.

In the sentence forming our text we have,

I. A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF HIS CHARACTER.

The character which is given of this eminent saint implies more than that he bore open testimony against sin, and that he possessed the form of godliness—two things in themselves requiring, in such a state of things, something more than mere profession of the service of God.

1. *Enoch was a man of faith.*

He walked with God—he was reconciled to him by faith in "the appointed way"—his faith took hold of the original promise—and through the prefigured atonement he received the reconciliation.

2. *He was a man of prayer.*

He walked with God—to him he brought all his concerns—his trials, through the hard speeches of ungodly men; his sufferings, from their opposition. At the appointed seasons he came to worship God—while all flesh was "corrupting *his* way," and asking "where is the sign of his coming?" Enoch was found in all the appointed ordinances—with all the required sacrifices;

and not only so—he was found seeking the “presence of the Lord” at other than the appointed seasons.

3. *He was a man of holiness.*

His life was consistent with his profession; the mass around him were sinking into profligacy—living in utter violation of the law of God. Enoch went not with them—he bore a faithful testimony against them; the farther they went from God, the nearer he drew to him.

II. HIS TRANSLATION. “He was not; for God took him.”

“He obtained,” says the apostle, “this testimony, that he pleased God,” and he “was translated, that he should not see death.”

1. *He passed immediately, body and soul, into the presence of his Redeemer.*

Some change, doubtless, passed upon his body, but it was not the change of death.

2. *His removal was as unexpected as it was marvellous.*

Some speculations have been made on this subject, which certainly bear the aspect of probability. Jude informs us that Enoch prophesied of the “coming of the Lord,” and bore his testimony against “the ungodly deeds of ungodly men.” And it has been supposed that, enraged by his faithfulness, the multitude were about to lay violent hands upon him—when God interposed, “and he was not; for God took him.”

If so,

3. *His translation was a public testimony given by God to the truth which his servant preached, and was a reward bestowed upon him for his own faith in the “coming of the Lord.”*

This faith had been evidenced in the name which he gave to his son, three hundred years before his translation, “Methuselah;” i.e., “He dieth and the Lord cometh.” The death of Methuselah took place in the year of the flood. Throughout three hundred years Enoch walked with God, bearing testimony to the same truth, and God strongly corroborated the truth by removing him while in the act of proclaiming it.

V.

WALKING WITH GOD, AND ITS ADVANTAGES.

GENESIS v. 24.—“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

To walk with God is the indispensable duty and exalted privilege of every genuine Christian—it is enforced by precept, recommended by example. The example of Enoch is one of the most illustrious on record; his was an age of iniquity, the cir-

cumstances of the times were unfavourable for piety—yet his intercourse with heaven was uninterrupted—his life, pure and circumspect—his conduct, spiritual and holy. With his servant God was so pleased that he exempted him from death, and took him to the full and perfect enjoyment of himself.

It is our intention to use the text as an occasion for offering some remarks,

I. ON WHAT IS IMPLIED IN WALKING WITH GOD.

The language is figurative; it supposes a *way*—the way of faith, of humility, of holiness; a knowledge of God—his nature and character, and relations to us; it supposes reconciliation with God—including pardon of sin, renewal of nature, and adoption into his family. These things being supposed to constitute the character of those who walk with God, we proceed to observe that this walk implies,

1. *That a deep and habitual sense of his presence is maintained.*

God is every where; he cannot be, as to his essence, in one place more than another; but there may be manifestations in some above others. The ungodly are not conscious of the presence of God—he who walks with God has a deep and habitual sense of that presence: he says with the Psalmist, “I have set the Lord always before me.” This sense of his presence produces the “fear of the Lord,” by which believers are always actuated.

2. *To “walk with God” is to keep within the path he has marked out for us.*

This path is a strait one, allowing of no deviation, permitting no sin, either of thought or feeling; but, on the other hand, the thoughts, feelings, and desires, must be spiritual and holy.

3. *To “walk with God” is to make progress in the way of holiness.*

Religion is progressive in its nature; the metaphors* used to illustrate it, all set forth this. We must not only *keep* in the way—that is a great mercy—we must go forward in it.†

4. *To “walk with God” is to keep open constant communion with him.*

True believers have free access to God in prayer; they acquaint him in this way with all their doubts and fears, their trials, temptations, and afflictions. From him they receive grace for all circumstances—to him praise or prayer is continually ascending, so that there is a constant interchange; while prayer or praise is ascending, grace, and joy, and salvation are descending.

II. THE ADVANTAGES OF THUS WALKING WITH GOD.

1. *It furnishes the best security.*

* Mark iv. 26—28. Proverbs iv. 18. Luke xiii. 20 & 21.

† Psalm lxxxiv. 7. 2 Peter iii. 28. 2 Peter i. 5—7.

Many are content to walk on the border of the narrow way, attempting to realize the world and God at the same time, but it cannot be done ; such persons are hazarding their souls. They who "walk with God," are under his protection, and safe in his keeping ; they are more watchful against temptation, and they are where the fiercest assaults of the enemy cannot molest them.

"Should all the hosts of death,
And powers of hell unknown,
Put their most dreadful forms
Of rage and malice on,
They shall be safe ; for Christ displays
Superior power, and guardian grace."

2. *It affords the purest happiness.*

Others are pursuing a phantom which ever eludes their grasp. Mere professors, mixed up with the world, are destitute of joy, of happiness, of peace ; while they, on the other hand, who "walk with God," experience a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory—unspeakable ! There is no describing it—there is no comprehending it but by experiencing it.

3. *It will secure eternal life.*

"To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me on my throne." Walk with God here,

"And soon your spirit, in his hands,
Will stand where your Forerunner stands."

It will ensure admittance to His presence, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

R.

VI.

NOAH'S OFFERING ON COMING FORTH OF THE ARK, AND ITS RESULTS,

GENESIS viii. 20, 21.—"And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD ; and took of every clean beast, and every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour ; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake," &c.

What a scene ! Noah and his family just come forth of the Ark into the world which had been the theatre of Divine vengeance—how solemn the occasion—and how appropriate the first act of the venerable patriarch ! "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD ; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar." In order that we may have the subject fully before us, we shall refer to this offering, in the occasion, in its nature, and in its results.

I. THE OCCASION ON WHICH THIS OFFERING WAS MADE.

It was on no ordinary occasion, under no ordinary circumstances, that this offering was made. During the sixteen hundred and fifty years in which the world had existed, there had been no such manifestation of the Divine character as this family had now witnessed. In the expulsion from paradise, and in the promise of a Redeemer, there had been exhibited wrath mingled with mercy; but in the deluge and its attending circumstances, these attributes were more signally displayed.

1. *On this occasion, how impressively would Noah and his family be reminded of the Divine forbearance which had been displayed to the old world?*

There had been since the fall a gradual unfolding of the scheme of mercy in the institution of sacrifice, the preaching of the patriarchs, and the teaching of the Spirit. On the other hand, there had been a gradual decline from the "way of the Lord," an increase of ungodliness, the spread of infidelity and licentiousness, ending in a state of utter godlessness. During this falling away, men were warned by the public teachers, and were the subjects of the strivings of the Spirit. All was of no avail: against the strivings of the one, they hardened their hearts, and to the preaching of the other they scoffingly and derisively replied, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The effect of such reckless depravity was tremendous: the Spirit of God was insulted and grieved; mercy, long slighted and contemned, threw down the olive branch and retired; justice, fearlessly defied, came forth with awful and tremendous vengeance.

2. *With what solemn awe would Noah and his family now view the earth, bearing on every part of its surface the marks of recent vengeance?*

When they entered the ark the earth was smiling with plenty, covered with verdure, and thickly populated; after they are secured within, the windows of heaven open, and pour forth in unabating torrent for the space of forty days and forty nights; the fountains of the great deep are broken up, the waters rise on every side; the highest mountains are soon covered; every living thing—the beast of the field, and the fowl of the air, men, women, and children, the whole mass of the earth's population, perish in the mighty waters. The rain ceases, the waters gradually subside, Noah and his family come forth from the ark—what must their feelings have been when they again trod the earth, the sole remnant of the human population?

3. *With what adoring and grateful feeling would Noah and his family view their own preservation on this occasion?*

Singled out by Divine mercy, preserved by Divine power, directed by Divine wisdom, they had built the ark. In this they had been preserved, while all around them was destroyed; mercy

was exhibited in the direction to prepare the ark, as well as in its subsequent preservation in the storm.

II. IN ITS NATURE.

In the offering which Noah made on this occasion we have,

1. *An expression of gratitude.*

It was his first act. He stayed not to erect a habitation for himself; he first built an altar to his God. Observe also how his gratitude was shown in the selection he made: his stock was small, yet he took of the *best* of his flock, "of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl."

2. *An acknowledgment of dependence.*

His offering consisted at least of one-seventh of his stock, made under circumstances which to a selfish mind would have been deemed a sufficient reason for withholding it—but Noah, remembering his recent preservation, in this offering expressed his confidence that He who had preserved him under such circumstances, would still continue to provide for his sustenance and safety.

3. *The offering of Noah was a lively exhibition of his faith in the future atonement, as well as an appropriate testimony that his recent preservation was owing to the efficacy of that atonement.*

"He took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl;" these only were permitted to be offered as sacrifices, and the fact that they were offered on this occasion, not only shows that the offering itself was sufficient, but also that the antediluvian church had been instructed in the nature and object of sacrifice. In this act Noah attributed his deliverance to the right source—the efficacy of that atonement which was to be made once in the end of the world, to which every sacrifice pointed, and from which they derived all their value.

III. IN ITS RESULTS.

1. *The offering was accepted.*

"The Lord smelled a sweet savour,"—how significant, how gracious this acceptance! The reason for this acceptance is to be found, not in the sacrifices themselves, but in the faith of the offerer; that faith took hold of the future atonement, and was therefore acceptable to God.

2. *The promise which was given.*

Noah in this offering expressed his dependence on God, who, in reply, promised a continuance of the blessings of his providence. He engaged, that "while the earth lasted, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, should not fail."

3. *The covenant which was made.*

"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, and I, behold, I establish my covenant with you;" in establishing this covenant he placed his bow in the cloud as a visible and perpetual demonstration of his faithfulness. That bow in its varied colours presents us with a rich and significant emblem of the exuberant fulness of the covenant of grace, of the union and har-

mony of the Divine attributes in that covenant. That bow is the symbol of mercy in a storm of wrath. Look at its form—it is bent upwards, indicating that vengeance is turned away, that the arrow of justice is directed at another—what an appropriate sign of the covenant of redemption!

L.

VII.

THE APPOINTED SACRIFICE.

GENESIS xxii. 8.—“My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.”

In this season of severe trial to the venerable patriarch there was yet mingled faith and hope; God was not only trying his faith, but was teaching him by this means the great doctrine of atonement, by the shedding of the blood of his own Son. The doctrine of the text is, that God only can appoint the mode and provide the means of human reconciliation.

I. THE SACRIFICE REQUIRED.

A victim was demanded, that on it justice might execute the vengeance written—a victim which could expiate human guilt. This man could not provide.* Angels, whatever their zeal for God, or pity for man, could not provide this sacrifice. The obedience required *they* could not give, the sufferings demanded *they* could not endure. A sacrifice much greater is demanded by Divine justice, and lo! it is found: “He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” Avenging justice grasps its flaming sword, and directs it to the heart of our generous substitute.

II. OUR DUTY REGARDING IT.

1. *It ought to be the subject of penitent contemplation.*

Behold him whose heart was crushed under the load of your sin! had it not been for his suffering you must have been wretched for ever. Look with what generous love he bears up under your curse, and ask yourselves can you any longer love sin.

2. *We ought to receive the blessings proffered through it.*

Many a sinner, agonized with a sense of his deplorable condition, has been willing to make any sacrifice, so that he could procure God's favour; in Jesus this favour is freely offered to your instant acceptance—he waits to give you of the water of life, and of the wine of the kingdom.

3. *We ought to cherish a love of holiness.*

The sacrifice of this lamb is an illustrious exhibition of God's love to man, but it is also a demonstration of his hatred of sin.

* Micah vi. 6 & 7. Isaiah xl. 16.

Love to holiness distinguishes all the disciples of Christ—their contemplation of his atonement increases their hatred to sin.

B.

VIII.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD WITH THE BELIEVER.

GENESIS xxviii. 15.—“Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

Such were the words addressed to Jacob from the top of the “ladder of vision,” when fleeing from his father’s house, and from the face of his brother Esau,—and such are the words addressed to every believer, while in a strange country, a pilgrim to the heavenly Canaan.

I. THE IMPORT OF THE DECLARATION.

“I am with thee.”

The presence of God with Jacob is here declared:—He is present in his nature and in his providence to all, but he is specially present to the Christian.

1. *His presence produces abounding consolation.*

Whatever the circumstances in which the Christian is placed, His presence makes the dark place light, the rough way smooth, the bed of sickness and the hour of trial seasons of rejoicing. Without his presence the world has no beauty, and prosperity no charms—with his presence a desert is a paradise, and adversity is welcome. The soul in his absence is like a landscape after the setting of the sun—no objects to be seen, no songsters to be heard; in his presence, it is like the same landscape when the sun is shedding upon it its meridian rays—all is light, melody, and beauty.

2. *His presence is protection and safety.*

Whatever the Christian’s lot in life, wherever Providence guides his steps, in whatever circumstances he may be placed, whatever trials he may encounter, the Lord is his keeper; his protecting arm—shielding him from danger—his fatherly care supplying him with temporal and spiritual mercies—his unremitting watchfulness of the efforts of spiritual foes, form the constant portion of the believer. In temptation, in danger, in joy, in sorrow, in society, in solitude, at home, abroad, He will keep thee.

II. THE PROMISE OF ITS CONTINUANCE.

“I will not leave thee.”

To the child of God belong exceeding great and precious promises; many of these have been already fulfilled, not one of them shall fail. There are promises of pardon, of sanctification, of comfort and support, of direction and assistance; here is one of

abiding presence, sealed with the blood of the covenant, firm as the pillars of heaven.*

III. THE ASSURANCE OF FINAL SUCCESS.

"I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken."

Every other pursuit will end in disappointment: riches make themselves wings—honours pass away like the glistening dew—friendships are ended by the suggestions of malice, caprice of temper, or the power of death—pleasures are transient, the means or the capacity of enjoyment withering away. But God will not leave:—his kindness, his love, his Spirit, his care, his peace, will not leave you. He will bring you to the promised land—however long the journey may appear, whatever enemies you may encounter. The ransomed of the Lord shall return; with unutterable rapture will you find yourselves received into glory.

B.

IX.

THE EXPECTATION OF THE DYING PATRIARCH.

GENESIS xlix. 18.—"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

Death is a serious and important thing, because of that which it removes us from, and of that to which it introduces us. It removes us from the pleasures, companionships, and business of earth, and forces us into an untried, and, so far as experience is concerned, an unknown state. This subject ought never to be one of indifference; it is sometimes, however, treated with a foolish hardihood by the unbeliever and infidel. Let us turn our attention to a different scene;—a dying Patriarch in his tent:—look,

I. AT THE OBJECT OF HIS SOLICITUDE.

"Thy salvation."

The patriarchs might not have the same clear notions of salvation which we have, but they had the substance with them. Salvation was the work of a life; they had to dig, and hew, and delve for it as for hid treasure. The types by which they read what it was, were in the case, and they had to set them before they could read. The salvation of the text is a salvation yet to come; it includes,

I. *Deliverance from trouble.*

The patriarch had had much of this with Laban, and Esau, and his own family.

2. *Deliverance from sin.*

His troubles had their origin in his sins; he felt that deliverance from these would be salvation indeed.

3. *An introduction to heaven.*

II. AT THE POSTURE IN WHICH HE EXPECTED IT—"I have waited."

1. *It was one of faith.*

His whole life illustrated this principle: his dwelling in a tent, his various removals, said *here is not my home.*

2. *It was one of hope.*

Expectation of it was constantly alive in his breast.

3. *It was one of patience.*

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

B—T.

X.

PERSONAL AND FAMILY RELIGION.

Exodus xv. 2.—"He is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him."

In this song Moses commemorates the remarkable deliverance which had been wrought out for himself and Israel, by the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Contemplating this deliverance, and recalling to mind the many wonderful interpositions of Divine power for their fathers, and more recently in the wonders of Egypt for themselves, Moses, in behalf of all Israel, declares that this God shall be their God; with them he shall have his habitation, and by them he shall be exalted.

I. AN IMPORTANT RESOLUTION.

I will prepare him a habitation, and I will exalt him. This resolution embraces two particulars: what he would do privately; what he would do publicly.

1. *What he would do privately.*

"I will prepare him a habitation."

(1.) *In his heart.*

It is the duty of every individual to prepare his heart as a habitation for God. The human heart, in a state of nature, is occupied by God's enemies:—there, Satan hath his seat; there, corruption reigns; there, no desire for God, no power to return to God. But God graciously vouchsafes spiritual influence—a measure of the Spirit is given to every man; each has it therefore in his power to prepare in his heart "a habitation for God." To do this, the understanding must be enlightened by his truth—the will subdued by his grace—the imagination preserved from impurity—the conscience freed from restraint. There must be an entire abandonment of sin, and entire obedience to his law. The heart must be yielded up to his sway, be purified by the blood of his Son, renewed by his Spirit, and thus made a habitation for Him.

(2.) *In his family.*

The first concern of the Christian—of him who has prepared a habitation for God in his heart, should be, to erect a habitation for God in his dwelling. He should secure this by offering, in the morning and at night, the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving—by singing his praises, searching his Word, imploring his blessing, seeking his guidance, and placing himself and affairs entirely in his hands. The loose and the profane must not be harboured in the dwelling where God has his habitation; there must be no *intimacies* with the ungodly; the table and the social circle must be preserved from the presence of those who are the enemies of the Holy One. In your engagements with the world, in your business, you must of necessity mix with the ungodly, *but the connexion must proceed no further, for the friendship of the world is enmity with God.*

2. *What he would do publicly.*

The purest and brightest services of creatures can add nothing to the glory of God; his name is exalted above all praise. But while the essential glory of God cannot be augmented or increased, there is a sense in which he may be exalted. The spreading of his cause, the observance of his commandments, the showing forth his praise, may add to his glory, by extending the knowledge of him. By thinking of him with reverence, by loving him supremely, by contemplating his ways, we exalt him. To exalt him, in the sense of the text, we must,

(1.) *Aim to advance his kingdom in the world.*

We should lay out ourselves for usefulness in the social circle, in our immediate neighbourhood, in our business connexions, in the town in which we live, in the villages surrounding. By personal effort, faithful reproof, persevering prayer, we should aim at the advancement of his kingdom.

(2.) *We should exalt him by an open acknowledgment of his cause, and by ascribing to him the glory of our salvation.*

On all appropriate occasions and in all proper places we should speak of his goodness and mercy; we should neither be afraid nor ashamed of telling others that we are the saved of the Lord.

(3.) *By consistent conduct and uniform obedience.*

We are called to be a holy people, and we exalt God most when we are most like him.

II. THE MOTIVES ON WHICH IT WAS FORMED.

The resolution to which Moses came originated,

1. *In personal experience of the Divine mercy.*

"He is my God."

This is the language of one who has been the subject of redeeming mercy; it is the breathing of the adopted child. My God!—not merely my Maker—though in that character he has claims upon me; not merely my Preserver—though here also I have occasion for grateful emotion; but my Redeemer—my reconciled Father—my God in Christ.

2. *Grateful remembrance of his past dealings.*
 "My father's God."

The God to whom *he* was devoted; *his* house was the place of *thy* habitation—there, *thy* praises were sung—there, *thy* name revered. "My father's God," to whom his life was devoted, from whom *his* mercies came. "My father's God;" the present Possessor of *his* spirit, and the Guardian of *his* dust.

G.

XI.

MOSES'S COMMUNION WITH GOD IN THE MOUNT; ITS EFFECTS AND DESIGN.

Exodus xxxiv. 29—35.—"And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses's hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him," &c.

There was a great deal of what was miraculous, no doubt, in this transaction, but there is much also, that, properly improved, will tend to our spiritual edification.

I. THE CAUSE OF THAT LIGHT AND RADIANCE WHICH APPEARED IN THE FACE OF MOSES.

The converse which Moses held with God in the mount was the cause of that glory which rested on his countenance. He ascended the mountain to hold intercourse with God, and while he talked with him his face shone. In the account of this transaction, there are two particulars worthy of notice.

1. *Moses offered sacrifices before entering to hold communion with God.* [See the narrative in the twenty-fourth chapter.]

This indicates a great principle connected with all true religion—That religion has always, from the beginning of the world to the present time, rested on sacrifice. Gen. iv. 4; Hebrews xi. 4. The Jewish religion, in all its ritual and services, rested upon this great principle. The distinctive feature of Christianity embraces the same principle. One of our great Christian privileges is to ascend the mountain and hold communion with God. But to be thus brought together, there must be something done on both sides. On the part of God there must be utterance given to the voice of mercy and love; there must be a way of access to his throne. On the part of man there must be faith. God in Christianity has made three great provisions to this end—a sacrifice, a mediation, and spiritual influences.

(1.) *The sacrifice of Christ is the standing medium of communion and fellowship between God and man.*

The atonement has only been offered once, yet the effect is perpetual and everlasting. In all his transactions with us, God

has ever regard to the sacrifice of Christ; He never pardons a sinner, but through the atonement;—He never adopts the prodigal, and invests him with the rights, privileges, honours, and immunities of a child, but through the atonement;—He never confers spiritual joy or any other blessing upon the believer, but through the atonement.

(2.) *There is a provision of mediation.*

The scheme of mediation does not merely embrace the office of intercessor, but it is a great, sublime scheme of spiritual and providential administration. Christ sits upon the throne; to him all power in heaven and earth is given—it is exercised with respect to the great purposes of atonement.

(3.) *Spiritual influence also is a part of Christianity.*

Spiritual influence is inseparably connected with the great work of our Lord and Saviour. We might as well talk of Christianity without a Saviour, as of Christianity without the Holy Ghost. These are the provisions which Christianity makes for our ascending the mount to hold communion with God; let us avail ourselves of them, and go up confidently and boldly with the blood of atonement to hear his voice, to taste his love, and to receive all the fulness of joy.

2. *Moses ascended the mountain alone.*

This opens to us another principle of religion. It is this—that in all respects it is personal. Our devotional exercises are of this nature. It is true indeed that we meet in public fellowship; but there is a sense in which the soul sits solitary in the midst of a mighty multitude. Our emotions are all personal. In his dealings with us, God addresses us as individuals: pardon, renewal, eternal life, are bestowed on individuals. These blessings are all personal. Duties are personal—one cannot discharge the duties of another. Enjoyments are personal. The closet is the place where we must test our religious character; there is something suspicious when our joy is only connected with public devotional exercises. But when we are alone and happy—when we are alone and enjoy communion with God, then may we regard our feelings as genuine.

II. THE NATURE OF THE LIGHT, BEAUTY, AND GLORY WHICH RESTED ON THE FACE OF MOSES.

There is a great mystery in this; but it was intended to be symbolical of a better glory. We shall pass over the symbolical meaning, and make some remarks of a practical bearing.

1. *Intercourse with God will cause his beauty to rest upon the soul.*

There will be rapturous joy. How can it be otherwise when the Saviour first reveals himself to the sinner's heart? How can it be otherwise when a man finds himself adopted into the Divine family, a partaker of the love of God, and admitted to daily fellowship?

2. *Intercourse with God must have the effect of expanding the capacity and of enlarging the soul.*

Worldly men designate Christians as little creatures; but that

soul which is stretched to the dimensions of Christianity, must be the greatest soul existing on earth. The religious man can enjoy every form of truth and knowledge in the world, in common with the man who is solely devoted to its pursuits; but, unlike him, he has the infinite prospect of the glories of heaven and eternal life.

3. *Intercourse with God will produce beauty of character.*

We cannot enjoy Divine grace, love, sanctification, and the privileges of the Christian state, but our internal purity will exhibit itself by a spotless life.

III. THE CONDUCT OF MOSES WHEN HE DESCENDED FROM THE MOUNT.

"He put a vail on his face."

There is a mystery here, but a mystery we shall not attempt to unravel. Religion in this life is often veiled under circumstances which obscure its grandeur. For instance, what a contrast there exists betwixt the employments of many Christians and their enjoyments: by the one they are almost assimilated to the beasts of the earth, by the other they are allied to heaven. Poverty, dark providences, and affliction, often veil the spiritual state of good men.

D.

XII.

MAN THE POSSESSOR OF THINGS WHICH ARE REVEALED.

DEUT. xxix. 29.—"Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

The text was originally spoken of that portion of divine truth which was at that time committed to the Jews—it is equally capable of an application to the whole system of revealed truth. In this way we shall now consider it.

I. THE CHARACTER OF DIVINE TRUTHS.

"Those things which are revealed."

1. *Their nature.*

They are revealed things: they are not the result of human reasoning, however deeply pursued, however long continued. In their nature and origin they are divine. They are the proceeds of infinite intelligence, they are surrounded by ineffable glory, they are the product of infinite mercy.

2. *The glory of their manifestation.*

God only could reveal them—and he has done so. There is nothing that we know about God; nothing that we know about man, either as to his present condition or future state; nothing which respects the great salvation, but has been communicated by God himself.

3. *Their transcendent importance.*

They are revealed things. What clearness is thus imparted to them—what certainty—what authority!

II. OUR CLAIM TO THEM.

"Those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children."

1. *The ground of our claim.*

They belong not to us as men: we are sinners, and as such can have no claim to provisions like these. Our claim is founded on the gift of God—they are given to us—the Saviour was given—spiritual influences are given—the promises are given.

2. *The extent of our claim.*

The whole system of revealed truth concerns us. There is nothing revealed that was not necessary; to all that is revealed we have a right. Every blessing in the covenant is ours; every thing that is said about God, his character and his ways, has some reference or other to our connexion with the things which are revealed; every thing that is said of Jesus Christ, as human or divine, is also connected with our duty towards, or possession of, the things which are revealed; every thing that is said of the Holy Spirit has the same connexion.

III. THEIR EVERLASTING CONTINUANCE.

We may infer this,

1. *From their adaptation to our circumstances.*

There is a striking connexion betwixt the provision made, and the state of human beings: bring the system of revealed truth before man, and there is something in his heart which responds to it.

2. *From the means of their transmission.*

God has not left his truth to make its way without providing for its communication to the beings for whom it is designed. He has engaged its preservation by having it written—he has ensured its application by a standing ministry—and he has made it effectual by joining to it the agency of his Spirit.

3. *From their wonderful preservation.*

The truths of God are the same now as they were when first recorded by the inspired penmen. They have outlived all opposition, they have thrown down every barrier to their progress, they have been gradually extending their influence and their blessings, and they will yet fill the world; "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth."

4. *From their influence on the nature of man.*

Divine truth has expanded the intellect, has bettered our social condition, has poured a flood of light upon the darkness of the future, has raised us to communion with God, and has elevated us to the hope of eternal life.

XIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN REFERENCE TO THE WORLD.

JUDGES v. 23.—“Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

The text is part of an epic poem, equal if not superior to the most admired productions of Greece and Rome. The subject is the victory obtained by the Israelites over Jabin, king of Canaan, which victory was followed by the death of Sisera the captain of Jabin's host, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from the yoke under which they had groaned for nearly twenty years. We may learn from the text various lessons respecting the duty of the people of God to sustain his cause in the world; and, in order that we may have the whole subject before us, we must glance at four propositions which are plainly deducible from the text.

I. THE CAUSE OF TRUE RELIGION HAS IN ALL AGES BEEN RECOGNISED AS THE CAUSE OF GOD.

Such was the cause for which Deborah and Barak fought on this occasion:—for,

1. *It had the sanction of his express command.*

Nothing else could have justified such an undertaking as a war against Canaan; but the will of God was revealed to them so clearly, as to leave them no alternative but to engage in it, or to be guilty of direct hostility to the designs of God. The cause of the true God was at this time among the Israelites. Here was the candlestick which he himself had set up and enlightened for the illumination of a dark and benighted world. The privileges and blessings communicated to them were not bestowed for the benefit of themselves alone, but for the benefit of the many nations by whom they were surrounded. It was the cause of truth against error, the cause of piety against idolatry and sin. Had their enemies triumphed, it would have been a victory, not only over Israel, but over Israel's God.

2. *It was the cause of God, because God's hand was in it.*

It was God who on that day subdued Jabin; the Israelites were but a small remnant, a mere handful of people. In point of number and the ordinary resources of victory, Israel was far inferior to their adversary, but they were strong in Israel's God. On this occasion, He employed the elements and all nature against his foes. Now let us apply this,

3. *To the great duty of individual Christians to aim at the conversion of sinners.*

That this is the case is evident,—

(1.) *From its having the sanction of his command.*

Never does the Christian church fulfil her high vocation until she makes attempts for the conversion of the ungodly by whom she is surrounded, and until she extends her sympathies and efforts for the evangelization of the world. Mark xvi. 12. Matt. v. 13—16. Acts viii. 4.

(2.) *God's honour is greatly involved in the success of it.*

All souls are his; He is the Father of the spirits of all flesh; He has not only made but redeemed all mankind; Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man. All creatures being thus bought with a price are the property of God, and ought to glorify Him in their bodies and in their spirits, which are his. But look at *facts*. We are surrounded on every hand by myriads who are without God and without hope in the world; the whole world lieth in the wicked one; the arch-apostate holds unrighteous possession of the redeemed; surely, then, the honour of God is involved in the success of his cause.

II. THAT IN CARRYING ON THIS GREAT WORK GOD HAS BEEN PLEASED TO DEMAND AND BLESS HUMAN EFFORTS.

In the case before us, the power of God was supernaturally exerted. The stars in their courses, the swelling of the river, the thunder and the tempest, were all effects of supernatural interposition; but even in them, these supernatural means were not intended to supersede those means which were ordinary. Deborah and Barak exerted themselves to the utmost; and with many others were required to come up to the help of the Lord. And similar is the case as to the conversion of sinners to God. True, we ought not to forget that without God we can do nothing: that without Him nothing is wise, or holy, or strong. But the work of converting sinners to God has always been by human agency, "God working with them, confirming their word with signs and wonders following."

III. THAT THE CALLS OF GOD TO ENGAGE IN THIS CAUSE EXPERIENCE A VERY VARIOUS RECEPTION FROM THOSE WHO ARE HIS PROFFESSED PEOPLE.

1. *Some are hearty in the cause of God.*

In the case before us, Deborah, though a female, stood pre-eminent, and Barak, and Benjamin, and Governors, and Princes, and they that handled the pen of the writer, were forward and energetic in the great conflict.

2. *Others cherish a spirit of indolence and carelessness.*

In Reuben there were divisions and separations; and how often are these the occasion of slackness amongst modern professors? Others were taken up with their possessions; others absorbed in mercantile pursuits; while others, to whom our text more especially refers, from whom much was expected, and who had no assignable reason for their conduct, declined engaging in the warfare at all.

IV. THAT GOD TAKES ESPECIAL NOTICE OF THE CONDUCT OF HIS PEOPLE IN REFERENCE TO HIS DEMANDS UPON THEM ; AND THAT HE MAKES AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION IN HIS CONDUCT TOWARDS THOSE WHO COME FORWARD, OR REFUSE TO COME FORWARD, IN HIS CAUSE.

Those who refuse to come forward are recorded as infamous, and are covered with disgrace. The case of Meroz is especially in point; they are marked out with a bitter and tremendous curse; after this we never read or hear of Meroz more! The blast of the Lord seems to have been on it from that time, withering it up and consigning it to oblivion. Those who honour God, he will honour; while those who despise him he will lightly esteem. Let us beware of the guilt of neutrality, of the sin of Meroz. "Awake, awake!" then, brethren. "Awake, awake!" Awake to a more deep concern for the salvation of your fellow men! Awake to zeal more intense for the glory of God, for the honour of Christ! Awake to efforts more energetic, more systematic, more consistent, than any you have yet made!

B.

XIV.

GOD DWELLING WITH MAN.

2 CHRON. vi. 18.—"But will God in very deed dwell with man upon earth?"

This was one of the most solemn occasions which ever occurred in the Jewish annals. The king offered up in the presence and audience of the people this comprehensive, impressive, and inspired prayer, in the course of which, when he came to realize the idea of Jehovah dwelling with man, he seemed for a time arrested and astonished—ceased to continue the course of supplication, and broke into an exclamation addressed to his own reason, as if calling on himself to certify that it was possible to believe in a truth so marvellous, "But will God," &c.

There are two things which strike one as having entered into the mind of the king.

I. THE INEQUALITY OF THE TWO PARTIES.

There was on the one hand God, whom he had ever regarded as a being infinitely removed from all that was temporary, limited, or carnal—who had said of himself, "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live;" and of whom Job had said, "Lo, he goeth by me and I see him not; he passeth on also, and I perceive him not." He knew him to be a being of unbounded power, from whom all things had sprung: "I am the Lord, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself." He knew him to possess a nature pure and spotless, and consequently opposed to all evil: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts. "There is none holy as the Lord

for there is none *besides* thee." Such a being filled the mind of the supplicating king; and, on the other hand, what did he behold in man? A creature dependent, frail, and perishing. So far from being on a footing with his maker, unable to comprehend him: "Who by searching can find out God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection." In his moral character how fearful the contrast! He is "altogether as an unclean thing." He has "gone astray from the womb, speaking lies." Viewing thus God and man, well may the dwelling of the one with the other awaken astonishment.

II. THE EXTENT OF THE CONFERRED PRIVILEGE.

1. *It embraces a proposal of God as an object of worship.*

There was no necessity resting on God to reveal himself. Nothing might have been seen in the creation of his power and godhead. If he had revealed himself to angels, he might have concealed himself from man. How vast the goodness of Jehovah; not only to unveil himself in the work of his hands and of his providence, but also to come down and say, that he personally abides on earth, and is ready to give counsel and blessing to those who seek after him!—Ex. xxv. 22.

2. *It involves the promise of Jehovah's entrance into the nature of man.*

It was well known to this monarch as an inspired teacher, that there is a striking distinction between the religion of an unfallen and of a fallen creature; that while the one could make a direct approach to the Most High, the latter could draw near unto him only through a mediator. The very announcement, therefore, on the part of him to whom all the urgency of the case was known, and who could not trifle with the hopes of his creatures, that he was willing to dwell with man, contained within it, implicitly, the promise that he would make atonement to his own law, that he would make "justice and mercy to meet together, righteousness and peace to kiss each other." Daily indeed did the most favoured minds perceive the way in which this was to be done; but times there were, of which this might be one, when the favoured individual was permitted to see afar off the day of the Messiah. The flame which burned within that temple of pure material, represented the Deity enshrined in an earthly tabernacle of spotless humanity. The "Word became flesh and dwelt among us." This was in its noblest sense God "dwelling with man upon the earth."

3. *It includes the perpetual residence on earth of the Holy Spirit.*

As the mere revelation of the being and perfections of God would have been of no avail to guilty men without an atonement, so an atonement would have been insufficient, apart from the influences of the Holy Spirit. From the first promise of a Saviour, accordingly, the Spirit has dwelt with man. When the multitudes gathered around the ancient prophet to hear his in-

structions, denunciations, and warnings, to whom did they in reality listen, but to the Spirit of God? When successive generations have come to consult the written testimony, to drink the refreshment of its promises, and to find guidance in its directions and counsels, whose words have they pondered but his who "moved holy men to write?" In every renewed heart may be seen a temple reared and inhabited by him, built with infinite skill, and beautified by infinite grace. "Know ye not that ye are then temples of God, and that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you?" "What is the whole church in its various gifts and qualities but his own home, the place of his presence upon earth?" Eph. ii. 19—22.

From this subject we learn,

1. *The high calling of all men.*

Though there is an infinite disparity between God and man, yet the one has condescended to dwell with the other. What a privilege! What a proof of the high capabilities and solemn destinies of man! Let no one trifle with his nature, or trample under foot the privileges to which he is summoned.

2. *The duty of believers cultivating the friendship of God.*

With what lowly earnestness should we draw near to him; to open our souls to the rays of his grace; to prefer above all things his society! With what vigilance should we seek to avoid all that would grieve or repel him; all that would estrange us from him!

C. M. B.

XV.

YOUNG CHRISTIANS CALLED TO USEFULNESS.

2 KINGS xxii. 1.—"Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem."

These were among the most remarkable years that ever passed over the kingdom of Judah. Josiah found society in the most degraded condition, and raised it by divine aid to a state of considerable prosperity. His days were long remembered, and served for ages afterwards to cheer many a doubtful traveller towards heaven.

Observe,

I. THE MANNER OF JOSIAH'S USEFULNESS.

1. *Its promptitude.*

He began early. He set out upon life and usefulness at once. It is best to begin every thing good at the earliest moment. It is difficult to change a selfish man into a benevolent one. Nor need the young despair. The greatest benefactors of the world have been young. David was little more than eighteen when he was anointed: Daniel was about the same age when he appeared in

Babylon: Josiah was only eight when he began to reign, and the blessed Jesus at twelve irradiated the temple with his wisdom.

2. *Its self-denial.*

It is difficult for those who live in king's palaces to be active and devoted. Idleness is the great snare of youth in all situations. What reproach, ridicule, and infidelity could not do, has been effected by mere indolence. Set yourselves against this assassin. Think of Josiah; above all, think of Him who, "though he was rich, became poor," &c.

3. *Its firmness.*

Josiah had doubtless many threats, allurements, and plausible representations to withstand; but he stood firm. Many on their conversion plead earnestly with their companions and their neighbours, but in a short time they desist. Why? They encountered frowns they did not expect, or have been assailed by cunning arguments which they knew not how to meet. They have not been "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Observe,

II. THE MEANS OF JOSIAH'S USEFULNESS.

1. *External reform.*

His religious light at first was faint, but sufficiently strong to show him that it was dangerous to have idolatrous altars and practices soliciting attention. It is something done for a man when he is withdrawn from situations in which he is in danger of being led into evil. A young man who delivers his companion from a snare does him a great service, though his heart remain unchanged.

2. *Scriptural instruction.*

By remarkable providence the book of the Lord, long forgotten, was found, and on being read to the king, deeply affected his mind, and gave great elevation to his subsequent proceedings. This book alone conveys the knowledge which exalteth a people. Its information is essential to eternal life. Young people should convey it to each other, and should gather around them the ignorant for instruction. The bread of life should be given to those who perish on every side.

Remarks.

1. *How blessed is the vocation of usefulness!*

It is sweet to rescue a fellow creature from drowning, sweeter to save a soul from death. This is within reach of every one. Few souls are saved by preaching alone, or by private means alone, but generally by a conjunction of both. "A word fitly spoken, how good is it!"

2. *How awful are the consequences of rejected endeavours at usefulness!*

Many of those to whom Josiah read the law were afterwards destroyed. The gospel is the savour of death unto death to some.

The disciples when they were rejected by a city were to say, as they took their departure, "Be ye sure of this, the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you." Let no one trifle with so great a message!

C. B.

XVI.

HOMAGE DEMANDED FOR CHRIST.

PSALM ii. 12.—"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they who put their trust in him."

There is here before us in succession, the Son, the homage, the danger, and the blessing.

I. THE SON.

He is the grand object held forth to the human mind. It was through him that the infinite, eternal, and invisible One made himself manifest at the beginning; for by him all things were created.—(John i.) Since our race rebelled against divine authority, he has been revealed as the King and Saviour of men. He appeared from the first moment of the fall as the Redeemer from the merited curse, and the Mediatorial Ruler of the world. It has been common with the historians, philosophers, and teachers of the world, to forget this. But confused and without order every thing must appear, until it is seen that Jesus Christ is the centre of all. So far from him being an object too insignificant to be noticed, he is the one object that demands attention.

II. THE HOMAGE DEMANDED. "Kiss the Son."

This was an act performed by subjects to kings expressive of reverence and love. There is required for Christ,—

1. *Reverence because of his supreme dignity.*

He is styled, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." When directly addressed it is in such terms as these:—"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Heb. ii. 8-12. When he came into the world, he confirmed these assertions by showing more than human excellence, and by acts of omniscience and omnipotence.

2. *Love also is equally due unto him.*

When you consider the uniform aspect of kindness which he presented to men, the humility and meekness of his manners, the depth and delicacy of his sympathy, his watchfulness in doing good, his promptitude in the forgiveness of injuries; it is impossible not to feel him to be entitled to supreme affection. Yet all this was merely preliminary to a greater display of love. He came to offer up himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He died to win us to God. He appeals to us on that ground, saying, "Reach hither thy hand . . . and be not faithless, but believing."

III. THE DANGER THREATENED. "Lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."

Anger may be incurred. The word is used in accommodation to human weakness. No excited emotions (ver. 4.) or vindictive sentiments can find a place in the Divine mind; but the judicial displeasure of a Ruler may and will be entertained towards those who despise his great mercy. There never was a more affecting instance of this than that referred to in this psalm. Those who are here styled the "heathen," the "people," the "kings," and the "rulers," were those who took part in the crucifixion of Christ. To them came this message of glad tidings: they rejected them, and now they are scattered among all people, "a reproach and a byword." This anger is often inflicted on the ungodly "*in the way*," i. e., when they are without thought prosecuting their ordinary employments. All appears smooth and prosperous, when suddenly the storm overwhelms them. Perhaps not even a dying bed is granted them, and they are hurried into the presence of their judge, and then into their eternal woe!

IV. THE BLESSING PROMISED. "Blessed are all they who put their trust in him."

1. *Blessed now* in the consciousness of reconciliation to God. They have come and believed in Christ, and so entered into peace. His work to them is the rock of ages, which no storm can shake, no lightning smite, no earthquake remove.

2. *Blessed in the arms of death*; for they meet him not as an "enemy," but as the messenger of their Father's love. No surprise then seizes them; no hurry, as when the greatest of all things has been forgotten; no struggle to excite an artificial confidence in a God long neglected and unknown; but all things are ready, and the spirit meets its Father in peace.

3. *Blessed on the great day of account*. This is the day for which all other days were made—the day which gives to man, and to man's life upon earth, all their importance. When millions tremble, he who on earth had loved Christ will then be calm. Then only shall his enraptured soul discover how vast the empire, how bright the crown are which had been prepared for the righteous.

Christians! keep your hearts "set on things above." The way is rough, and the foes numerous. Have your loins girt about.

Unbelievers! while time, health, and soundness of mind last, before judgments or a dying bed terrify you, "kiss the Son."

C. M. B.

XVII.

KNOWLEDGE OF OUR OWN SINS A DIFFICULT ACQUISITION.

PSALM xix. 12.—“Who can understand his errors?”

This question was put by David after he had been meditating on the purity of the divine law. He was conscious of his numerous transgressions in thought, word, and deed against that law; but he knew that there were many more concealed even from himself. To escape from self-delusion and deception, it is of the highest importance that we should be aware of the extreme difficulty of understanding our own errors. Let us therefore consider,

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR OWN SINFULNESS IS AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT ATTAINMENT.

This may be easily inferred from the fact, that very few acquire much of this knowledge, and none perfectly. The blindness of men to their own faults, has been a constant theme for ridicule and satire. Even very young children are quick to discern faults and failings of their parents and instructors, of which the latter are quite ignorant. The covetous, the vain, and the proud, seldom believe themselves to be such, and often censure others for the very faults of which they themselves are guilty. Now, if men are thus universally blind to faults in themselves which others can see, how much more must we all be blind to those secret sins of the heart which others cannot discover, but which are known only to God? The scriptures declare that we are dead in trespasses and sins; that there is none that doeth good, no not one; and of this the generality of men are entirely ignorant. But hundreds of writers have asserted that the human heart is naturally good, and thousands have believed the assertion: which fatal belief is a positive bar to the reception of the Saviour, since while under its influence we never feel our need of him. This delusion can be only dispelled by the work of God's Spirit, whose office it is to convict of sin, and God would not have sent his Spirit to perform a useless work.

Such being the extreme difficulty of understanding our errors, it is a natural enquiry,

II. WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THIS DIFFICULTY?

1. *One cause is ignorance of the Divine law.*

“Where there is no law,” says Paul, “there is no transgression;” and if persons be ignorant of the law they must also be ignorant of their transgressions. But men are unacquainted with the divine law, and esteem meritorious and innocent many things which God condemns; such as the love of fame, resentment for injuries, &c. The consequence of this ignorance is, that they can-

not understand their errors; but this ignorance is guilt because it is voluntary.

2. *Another cause is the prevalence of self-love.*

Man naturally loves himself above every object in the universe. He is therefore, of course, very partial and tender in judging of himself. He flatters himself that his character is upon the whole good. He extenuates and palliates his failings, which he counterbalances by a long list of virtues.

3. *Another cause is the deceitfulness of sin.*

Satan is often transformed into an angel of light. Vice assumes the garb of virtue, sin of godliness. Actions good in themselves become sinful by reason of the unworthy motives which dictate them, and it is a very difficult task for the most serious and earnest self-examiners to detect this deceitfulness of sin.

4. *Another cause is the effect produced by sin upon the conscience and understanding.*

Sin darkens the understanding and sears the conscience. The worst men are those who have the best opinion of themselves; the best men generally lament and deplore their own sinfulness. The effect of habit also is very great, in rendering men insensible to their sins. The savage, familiarized by long habit with the smoke and filth of his cabin, sees nothing in it disgusting; so the sinner, from long habit, sees no defilement or pollution in the soul, where God beholds *nothing but* defilement and pollution.

APPEAL.

To the impenitent on the danger of self-deception, and on the necessity of resorting to the cross.

P.

XVIII.

CONFIDENCE IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

PSALM xxiii. 4.—“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”

The finest imagery of the fine writings of the sweet singer of Israel, is taken from the scenes of his early life. We have an example in the text.

I. THE SOLEMN EVENT ANTICIPATED.

Death. Some think otherwise—Bunyan, for instance, who applies the strong figurative language of the text to seasons of mental conflict or of physical anguish. It may be so—but this imagery is also used in other parts of scripture to describe the final passage. Job. x. 20-22; and xxiv. 17.

1. *The descent into this valley is by various avenues.*

“Or worn by slowly rolling years,
Or broke by sickness in a day.”

The instruments of death are various; some are removed at a stroke, others gradually descend into the dark valley; to some the passage is comparatively easy, to others it is one of intense suffering.

“Dangers stand thick through all the ground
To push us to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around
To hurry mortals home.”

2. *The descent into this valley must be undertaken.*

It is appointed unto all men once to die. Whatever may be your present position, however remote the period may appear, however unwilling to entertain it, even in thought, however indifferent to the subject, however unconscious of its approach, you must die.

3. *The descent may be nearer than you are aware of.*

Some of you may be at the very entrance of the valley, some even now descending.

Death is not only before the old man's face, it is also behind the young man's back. Go through the grave-yard, and there you will find epitaphs of all scales, and graves of all lengths, only you will find that the short ones preponderate.

4. *The valley must be passed alone.*

None of your friends can enter it with you, and sustain you through it. Once passed, there is no return; this is it which makes it so solemn a matter. There is no retracing your steps, no amending your ways.

II. THE HOLY CONFIDENCE OF THE PSALMIST IN PROSPECT OF IT.

Walking—deliberately, cautiously, calmly, circumspectly; not rushing along it, heedlessly, rashly, fearlessly. Whence came this holy confidence, so contrary to our habitual shrinking from it?

1. *His relationship to the shepherd.*

Religion is a personal thing, it is a concern of the heart; David had cultivated it, he knew that he was one of the sheep.

2. *His personal experience.*

He had had many manifestations of his care. I will remember thee from the land of Jordan. He brought to mind seasons of affliction, of trial, of peril, in which he had been preserved and blessed. “Is it conceivable that so many deliverances should be wrought out for me, and so much preserving care exercised respecting me, and yet that I should be forsaken at last! No, I will fear no evil;” no physical evil,—none of the pains to which I may be subjected in the taking down of this tabernacle. No mental evil—though the enemy may come in as a flood, thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me. No family evil—my children, my friends, I leave to the care of Him whose eye never slumbers nor sleeps.

III. THE LESSONS TO BE GATHERED FROM IT.

1. *Religion is the highest prudence.*

It is a preparing for events beyond the grave. It is a training for the lifetime of eternity.

2. *He who is prepared to pass through the valley is prepared for every other trial.*

The man who is prepared to die, is fitted to encounter all the ills of life.

3. *It is ineffable folly not to be prepared.*

To make no preparation for a journey that you must take, and that you may have to take soon, and whose consequences are eternal, displays a recklessness for which no language can furnish terms of sufficient condemnation.

B—T.

XIX.

LOVE TO GOD'S HOUSE.

PSALM XXVI. 8.—“Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.”

Similar language to this had been employed from the earliest periods to designate those places where the worship of God has been celebrated, and where special tokens of the Divine presence have been realized. Viewed in this light, the patriarchal altar was the habitation of God. There—families collected together to call on the name of the Lord. The tabernacle of Moses was emphatically the habitation of God. Here was the Shekinah, the visible symbol of the Divine presence. The Jewish temple is expressly designated the house of the Lord. But these have long since disappeared; they passed away with the ordinances with which they were inseparably connected. And where now is the house of God? An inspired apostle directs us to the church of Christ. The church is the house of God. Wherever there is an assembly of believers, there we have the house of God.

I. SOME REASONS FOR ATTACHMENT TO THE HOUSE OF GOD.

1. *Every pious man loves the house of God, because he loves him whose house it is.*

True piety consists in loving God—in loving him supremely: but he who loves God, loves every thing that belongs to God. God loves his own house: “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” And if so, then they who love God will also love his house.

2. *The exercises which are performed there, form another ground of attachment to the house of God with the pious man.*

(1.) *It is a house of prayer.*

“My house shall be a house of prayer to all nations;” this is one of the chief exercises of the sanctuary, it is that which con-

stitutes the most essential part of the worship of God. Every pious man loves prayer, and therefore he must love the place where prayer is wont to be made.

(2.) *The preaching of the word is an important part of the services of the house of God.*

By this is made known the will of God in reference to man's salvation; here is developed the wondrous plan of human redemption; here are enforced all the precepts of the revealed word; and here is prepared the spiritual repast for the use of edifying. The word of God in all these ways is sweet to the taste, of the pious man, yea, sweeter than the honeycomb.

(3.) *The singing the praises of God is another exercise of the sanctuary.*

A heart glowing with love to God—swelling with grateful emotion for blessings received from him, labours to give vent to its feelings in the hymn of praise; and nowhere is praise so acceptable to God as when presented in his house. "In the midst of the church will I give praise unto thee."

3. *Another reason why the pious man loves the house of God, is because of the company he finds there.*

The religion of the Bible accommodates itself to the social nature of man. Man is essentially a social being; he is acted on by sympathy, and it is in the sanctuary where this is brought into full operation. Here he is brought into fellowship with kindred spirits, members of the same family, partakers of the same privileges, sharers of a common joy, and inheritors of the same blessed hope.

4. *Because of the blessings he receives there.*

Blessings innumerable, inestimable, imperishable, are bestowed upon him in the sanctuary. "In all places where I record my name will I come unto thee, and bless thee."

The blessing of pardon is frequently dispensed here to the humble, penitent, seeking sinner. Here strength is obtained to resist the adversary in those conflicts which form the lot of the saint of God. Here are blessings for every condition, suited to every capacity, fitted for all circumstances. "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God."

II. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF THIS ATTACHMENT.

Profession is of little worth if it is not attended by a correspondent conduct. If you love the house of God, you will show it by,

1. *Constantly attending there.*

You will not be hindered by any trifling circumstance.

2. *By the fervency of your devotion.*

The state and temper of the mind discovers itself in devout reverence.

3. *By efforts to increase the number of worshippers.*

The child of God lives not for himself, but for others. He is expected to be a co-worker together with God in diffusing the

blessings of religion amongst a fallen and degraded race. "Ye are the salt of the earth."

N.

XX.

REDEMPTION OF THE SOUL PRECIOUS.

PSALM. xlix. 8.—"The redemption of their soul is precious."

The soul, noble in its capacities and immortal in its nature, is here stated to stand in need of redemption. The salvation of such a soul must be of infinite importance.

I. THE IMPORTANT DECLARATION MADE IN THE TEXT: "The redemption of their soul is precious."

This is seen,

1. *In the sacrifice made for it.*

It was no earthly object, not treasures of silver and gold, not the offering of the cattle of a thousand hills; it was the blood of the Son of God which was shed for its redemption.

2. *In the blessings procured for it.*

By this redemption all who believe are delivered from all the pains of the lost, and to them are secured all the enjoyments of heaven. Robes of glory washed in the blood of the Redeemer, will form their attire; and palms of triumph, waved through eternity, will express their joy.

3. *In the agents employed to effect its redemption.*

Here we have for our contemplation the purpose and mercy of the Father; the love, obedience, and suffering of the Son; the promise and grace of the Holy Spirit. The redemption of the soul is precious; the groans of the lost assert it, the songs of the redeemed proclaim it. Its wonders shall furnish to saints and angels through eternity, subjects for praise.

II. DRAW SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES.

1. *Seek the actual redemption of your own soul.*

You are already redeemed by price, seek to be redeemed by power. Learn the importance of doing this without delay. The blessing is of inestimable value, the time given to obtain possession of it is limited; while you delay, it may be lost to you. Let the remembrance of the ardour and perseverance of Christ in seeking your redemption, act as a powerful motive on you to secure your own.

2. *To you who are saved let the contemplation of your Saviour's love animate you in duty, encourage you in despondency, and strengthen you in trial.*

Seek your happiness in this in all circumstances. Anticipate the period of full redemption, when your body, redeemed from the power of the grave, fashioned like unto the glorious body of

your blessed Saviour, shall be reunited with your spirit, and you shall mingle with the multitudes of the redeemed who surround the throne. Then redemption will be your continual theme.

B—I

XXI.

REDEMPTION.

PSALM xlix. 8.—“For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.”

We propose to speak of that redemption of which the soul of man is the subject—of that blood of Christ which is the price of its redemption—of that time which is the limited period of its accomplishment.

I. THE SUBJECT OF REDEMPTION.

To acquire right views of the importance of redemption as to its subject, we may glance at the powers, the affections, and the duration of the soul.

1. *Its powers.*

(1.) *It is endowed with the faculty of knowledge.*

Paul tells us that knowledge is a feature of the image of God. The object of redemption is not mere matter, but an intelligent being, the only being on this earth capable of apprehending the discoveries which God has made of himself.

(2.) *It is endowed with the power of choice.*

Man is a moral agent; he acts under the influence of moral motives. He is not the creature of chance; he is not willingly the prey of accident; he has the power, to a certain extent, of controlling his circumstances. He is, further, capable of knowing and of loving God, and of being like God.

2. *Its affections.*

The soul has lost the image of God—every feature is obliterated. The temple is in ruins, and the Great Inhabitant gone. It is utterly corrupt, polluted, debased, at enmity against God. It is the prey of every bad passion, of every polluting affection; consequently its tendency is to misery; and, unless it be redeemed, it will be miserable for ever.

3. *Its duration.*

The soul of man will live for ever. This discovery is made entirely by the gospel. The heathen world knew nothing of it. The soul will live for ever; and, through the eternity of its existence, it must either be a happy spirit before the throne of God, or a hopeless outcast from his heaven.

II. THE PRICE OF ITS REDEMPTION.

How vast the price paid for the redemption of the soul!—the precious blood of Christ. Had the whole creation been consumed

in one mighty conflagration, as the price of redemption, it would have been as nothing compared with this. *How precious the price of redemption!* The Deity became enshrined in man—not changed into a man, but most mysteriously united to a man; the price of redemption was—His blood. This price was given. 1 John, iii. 16.

III. THE PERIOD OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENT IS LIMITED. “It ceaseth for ever.”

How precious, how infinitely precious, is time! It is in time only that the redemption of the soul can be ensured. The value of *one* opportunity of hearing the gospel is unspeakably great.

M.A.

XXII.

THE FUTURE SATISFACTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PSALM xvii. 15.—“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

The Christian life appears a heap of contradictions, a list of anomalies. It is a life of sorrow, yet a life of joy; a life of contest, yet a life of triumph; a life of fear, yet a life of hope. 2 Cor. iv. 7—9. It is a life of danger, distress, difficulty, tribulation; yet a life of peace, joy, abounding consolation, and eventual triumph. The psalmist was well acquainted with these varied aspects in the life of a child of God. He appears to have been reproached for his attachment to God, and his condition to have been contemptuously and derisively contrasted with the prosperous circumstances of his enemies, who hunted for his life. Under these circumstances he strengthened his mind by the considerations of the text, where we have,

I. A CONTRAST IMPLIED. “As for me.”

This contrast is betwixt the actual condition of the righteous and the wicked. There are three things in which, even in the present life, the lot of the former excels that of the latter.

1. *In their relation to God.*

The righteous are reconciled to God. There is a worm at the root of all the enjoyments of the wicked, a blasting mildew on all his pleasures, a withering blight on all his joys; for there is the consciousness of unpardoned sin, the feeling of unpreparedness for the future state, the pressure of the curse of God. But the Christian has nothing of this. It is true he was once darkness, but now he is light in the Lord; he was a child of wrath, even as others, but is now reconciled to God by the death of his Son; he was afar off, but is now brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Besides this, to him belongs the adoption—he is a partaker of the nature and a sharer of the privileges of the children of God. With the wicked it is not so: they are the children of the evil

one, led captive by him at his will, slaves of his passions: in a word, they are connected with him who is the most malicious, most malignant, and most mighty of the fallen spirits; he is their head, they are his body.

2. *In their pursuits.*

The pursuits of the wicked are unworthy of immortal spirits; they are taken up with the toys of earth, although capable of enjoying God. Vain and frivolous are the objects highest in their esteem. They seek for nothing beyond the present: the pleasures of sense, the esteem of men, the wealth and honours of the world, are the things of paramount importance with these. How different is it with the Christian: how noble his pursuits; how exalted his relations! Some of them are compelled to toil all the week for the bread that perisheth, from an early hour in the morning till a late one at night; they are associated with beasts of burden in the drudgery of the field, or perhaps mining in the bowels of the earth, far from the light of the day, for the convenience and comfort of their fellow men, and this is going on every day of the week, and every week of their lives. Now, go with them to their homes, which are perhaps scantily furnished, their children poorly clad, and worse fed; but follow them to their closets, and you will find them kneel down, and hold communion with the Majesty of the universe; you find them associated with all that is great, good, and ennobling in the universe.

3. *In their enjoyments.*

The enjoyments of the wicked are worldly, such as they have in common with the beasts that perish; they are also temporary, compassed within this present life, and many a time ending even before this. The enjoyments of the people of God are heavenly, of the same nature with those of angelic spirits, ay, and of God himself; they are also future, enduring, and eternal.

II. THE CONFIDENCE EXPRESSED.

"I shall behold thy face in righteousness."

This confidence has,

1. *A noble object.* "Thy face."

This expression, no doubt, refers to those discoveries which God will make of himself in the future state.

Such discoveries are to be made. "Beloved," says the apostle John, "it does not yet appear what we shall be." Another apostle in one place, contrasts the glory of the Christian with the Jewish dispensation, and says, that this has no glory because of that which excelleth; yet nevertheless speaks of this more excellent glory in another place, as not to be put in comparison with that of the future existence. "Now we look through a glass darkly."

These discoveries will be ineffably glorious, and will transcend all other discoveries yet made. This may be inferred from that remarkable narrative in which Moses asks to see God's face, and

is told that he cannot see his face; but shall see his back parts. What were these back parts—this inferior display of himself? Why, the most glorious announcement which was ever made to our world; an announcement which led Moses eagerly to exclaim, "Oh, go up with us!" an announcement, which while it gives its chief value to, receives also its chief illustration from, the scheme of redemption. If the inferior display, the back parts, be so glorious, transcendently so must be the face of God.

But in what will it consist?

No doubt there will be sensible glory, some external manifestation; but it will chiefly consist in a full and correct exhibition of the Divine character, it will be a clearing up of all that was mysterious in his ways. Yet who can form any adequate conception of it? The mighty intellect of the great apostle, although he had been favoured with "superabundant" heavenly visions, tried in vain to do it; sometimes he heaps up words to heaven, as though by them he would climb there to tell us what this glory is.

In this confidence we have,

2. *A firm conviction.* "I will behold."

The psalmist had a firm conviction that he himself would be engaged in studying the character of God as it will be then disclosed. The life of heaven will be an active one; all the powers and faculties of man's then exalted nature will be called into vigorous and continual exercise by those discoveries which will be then made. In this will consist the happiness of heaven. This confidence is built,

3. *On a proper basis.* "In righteousness."

This expression may refer to the meritorious procuring of this vision, that is, by the mediatorial work of Christ, which is said to be a display of the righteousness of God; or it may refer to the character in which we shall see God. The distinctive character of the redeemed through eternity will be that of pardoned sinners. There will always be this difference between them and angels; it can never be forgotten that Christ was made sin for them, that they might become the righteousness of God in him. This, however, is only a relative righteousness; there will be a real inward righteousness also; a great and transforming change will take place on the physical and spiritual nature, before we are capable of the sight of God. This change once effected, we shall behold his face in righteousness, never affected by temptation, no longer liable to sin. The righteousness will not only be relative, but real:

"There we shall see his face,
And never, never, sin."

III. THE SATISFACTION ANTICIPATED.

Listen to the exulting language of Paul—"who will fashion this vile body, and make it like to his glorious body." "We shall

be like him" in the spirituality of our nature ; not that we shall be pure spirit, but we shall have spiritual bodies, and no longer be exposed to those infirmities which now fill our services with imperfections. " Like him " in purity—" God is light ; " glorified spirits will partake of this likeness to God—holiness now will form part of their nature ; " like him " in love—" God is love."

This will yield satisfaction, entire contentment to the children of God. Here believers may be satisfied as to their security ; but they are never satisfied in this life as to their enjoyment of God. But then you will be satisfied, for you will possess that for which Christ died, you will possess that for which you lived on earth ; the end of your faith, the object of your hope, the aim of your life ; for this you endured affliction, passed through trial, were the subject of scorn ; your race is run, your battle fought, your toils over, your sufferings done, your trials past, your battle won, your enemy conquered, your soul saved ! What cause for satisfaction !

XXIII.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

PSALM xcvi. 6—9.—" The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols : worship him, all ye gods. Zion heard, and was glad ; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord. For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth : thou art exalted far above all gods."

The book of Psalms is enriched with large portions of evangelical prophecies ; we cannot read them carefully without remarking the numerous accounts they contain of the advent of Christ, and the nature and glory of his kingdom. From the epistle to the Hebrews we find that this psalm is a prophetic description of the Messiah ; and from that application of it we deduce two very important truths concerning the Christ ; one, respecting the dignity of his person, " the first begotten ; " the other, his glorious exaltation as Messiah. It is to this latter truth that we shall now confine our attention.

I. THE INTERESTING FACT TO WHICH THE PROPHECY REFERS.

The psalm is introduced with a celebration of the government of Jehovah. " The Lord reigneth." From internal evidence we may gather that the psalmist does not refer to Jehovah's government of the Jews as a nation, nor to his providential government of the earth, but to that government which is laid upon *his* shoulder, who is Jehovah's fellow at the same time that he is the Son of Man,—to the government of him who is God manifest in the flesh, and who is received up into glory. He is called Jehovah,

a name by which the promised Messiah is frequently designated in the prophecies.

The exaltation of Christ is one of those facts which are replete with interest, and to which we look with wonder and delight. Before he appeared in our world, "his goings forth were of old, even from everlasting;" his appearing in our world was a veiling of his glory under the form of our nature, and in that nature he endured the death of the cross; his resurrection was a reappearing in glory; in his ascension he exhibited the dignity of his Godhead; and on entering heaven he sat down on the throne of his Father, to administer the affairs of that kingdom which he had now established, the duration of which is to have no end.

1. *In the exaltation of Christ we have abundant proof of the acceptance of his sacrifice, and that it answered all the important purposes for which it was designed.*

This is an important fact; his sacrifice was accepted by the Father; that sacrifice was expiatory in its nature. His death is not to be considered as that of an illustrious martyr; it was sacerdotal. He was offered on the cross, that his sacrifice might reach back to the sins of the first transgressor, and forward to the last of mankind. When he entered heaven it was with his own blood; he appeared there bearing the marks of his mysterious suffering. He is exalted, but it is as a sacrifice. He is exalted, but it is as High Priest. He is exalted, but it is as Mediator. He is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.

2. *Christ by his exaltation is invested with mediatorial power and dominion.*

Mark the language of the apostle in Philippians ii. 6 to 11. Here you have a proper view of the dominion of Christ. It is a mediatorial dominion. All things are put under him; there is not a creature in the whole range of being, who does not yield a willing or an unwilling, a conscious or an unconscious, homage to him. He employs all things to accomplish the purposes of his mercy. "The same love which led him to the manger of Bethlehem, which actuated him through all the sufferings of Gethsemane and Calvary; the same pure, sublime philanthropy still actuates him!" Oh yes! he loves sinners: he loves them ardently; and all his power and all his grace are employed to collect, to associate them, and to conduct them to the throne of God. To the salvation of men he subordinates every thing; human affairs, opposition of devils, the ministry of angels, the whole universe!

II. THE IMPORTANT EVENTS FLOWING FROM THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THIS PROPHECY.

The whole passage refers to Christ. Every idea is employed to illustrate the glory of his reign. Among other results we have,

1. *The revelation of Messiah's righteousness.*

The words cannot be taken literally. We cannot conceive how the heavens can declare the righteousness of his government. We may conceive how they declare the wisdom, or the power, or the glory of God; but how they can declare his righteousness, except as applied to Christ, we cannot see. Applied to him they literally attest his righteousness, in the voice from heaven at his baptism, and when he appealed to his Father, and said, "Father, glorify thy Son." Such passages as, "Truth shall spring out of the earth: and righteousness shall look down from heaven;" "Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness," are usually explained away by referring all to the figurative style and imagery of the sacred writers. But why not say, that this expression of the heaven's raining down righteousness, is a fine way of explaining to us how righteousness is imparted by heaven to this wretched world? Does not the gospel display the righteousness of Christ? Does it not disclose the way of reconciliation, and show the sinner how he may be righteous with God?

2. *The manifestation of his glory; mercy and truth here meet together.*

In Christ we see a justice more awful than that which punishes devils, united with a love more glorious than that which shines among the angels in heaven. In Christ, God is reconciling the world unto himself. To Christ belongs the glory of revealing the Father to the world, and how hath he revealed him? not clothed with terror, not surrounded with majesty; but as a Father, our tender, compassionate, reconciled Father. To Christ belongs the glory of opening a new way of access to God, and now we may look up, and go up. Christ has thrown a pathway of life across the gulf of death, which is between God and us. To Christ belongs the glory of peopling heaven with new and holy inhabitants.

3. *The conversion of idolaters.* "Confounded be all they that serve graven images."

This is not a malediction, but a prediction of the overthrow of idolatry. How will it be overthrown? Not by coercion, but by the gospel. Let this light be diffused, and darkness cannot remain. Nothing is necessary to the removal of falsehood but the presence of truth.

4. *The presentation of universal homage.* "Worship him, all ye gods."

The apostle renders it, "let all the angels of God worship him." Christ shall receive the homage of adoring multitudes. In the apocalyptic vision, John saw the "Lamb in the midst of the throne," the object of worship to all orders and ranks of intelligences, comprising a multitude which no man could number.

5. *The joyous exultation of the church.* "Zion heard, and was glad."

In proportion as God accomplishes his redeeming plans, the

church is filled with abundant joy. The triumphs of Christ are the glory and the joy of the church. When he shall have subdued the nations, then the whole host of the redeemed, with all the ranks of angels, will burst forth in one loud, prolonged, eternal song, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

In conclusion, we must remind you of the judgments of the Lord. An awful day is approaching, amid the convulsions and solemnities of which, his throne, the throne of judgment, will be set up; and then to those who would not be subdued by his grace, or attracted by his cross, while they are weeping and wailing he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, to the devil and his angels." Then turning to the myriads of his redeemed, he will say, "Come! come! enter the kingdom prepared for you;" and rising from his throne, passing along their ranks, surrounded by the heavenly host, he and they will ascend towards the heavenly Jerusalem, amidst the general burst of—"Lift up your heads, ye heavenly gates, that the king of glory may enter in."

L.

XXIV.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

PSALM lxxviii. 18.—"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

This passage is applied by the apostle Paul to the Lord Jesus Christ; we may therefore use it in the way of illustration of some things connected with the exaltation of our Redeemer.

Let us notice,

1. THE FACT OF HIS ASCENSION.

1. *He ascended in human nature.*

He assumed that nature as our representative, and as our representative he has entered into heavenly places. He took our nature in its state of degradation, but he has exalted it, and by his exaltation he has given us the pledge of raising our nature from its state of degradation.

2. *He ascended to heaven.*

The place of glory—of God, the Father of glory—of angels—and of the spirits of the just made perfect.

3. *Then there are the circumstances of his ascension.*

He ascended *visibly*: while he was in the act of blessing, having led out his disciples as far as Bethany, he lifted up his hands to bestow the parting benediction, and then with uplifted hands, and the word of blessing yet on his lips, he was parted from them. He ascended in *glory*; a procession of "twenty

thousand chariots, even thousands of angels," accompanied him in his upward course; and, as they drew near to the heavenly city, the anthem, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates!" burst forth from the attendant multitude, and amidst the rejoicing of the glorious throng he entered and sat down in the glory of his Father.

THE TRIUMPHS WITH WHICH IT WAS ATTENDED.

"He led captivity captive;" that is, he led a multitude of captives captive, who had formerly been remarkable for leading others captive. This supposes,

1. *Our Lord's conflict with these foes.*

To conquer them he must first encounter them. Satan, sin, and death, were the foes he had thus to encounter.

2. *His conquest of them.*

He engaged in the deadly conflict, and did not yield till "It is finished," showed how it had terminated. That was the shout of triumph of him who, having trod the wine-press alone, had stained all his raiment with the blood of his enemies.

3. *His triumph over them.*

"Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly;" proclaiming, as he passed from the land of his enemies, his conquest and victory, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

III. THE INESTIMABLE BENEFITS SUPPLIED BY IT.

Let us look at them,

1. *In their nature.*

Soon after his ascension Christ bestowed various gifts on the world. The gift of his Spirit—to enlighten, to strengthen, to seal, and perfect.

2. *In their objects.*

"For the rebellious." For the human race, rebellious in mind, in profession, in life—for those who might justly have expected the thunders of Heaven's wrath to burst upon them.

3. *In their design.*

"That the Lord God might dwell among them." The Lord dwells among men by mercy, by his manifold grace, in his eternal glory.

H.

XXV.

THE GOSPEL THE POWER OF GOD.

PSALM lxxii. 16.—"There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."

"The gospel," says an inspired apostle, "is the power of God;" and this is the only reasonable and the only consistent mode of

accounting for the effects which it has produced, and the mighty triumphs it is yet destined to accomplish. Such figurative language as that of the text, is frequently employed to describe the gospel as a mere system of means, unlikely to accomplish the purpose contemplated, and yet as certain of ultimate success. Considering this language as referring to the gospel in its commencement, difficulties, and triumphs, let us notice,

I. THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF ITS COMMENCEMENT.

We find this mode of representing the gospel in its commencement frequently employed. For instance, in Ezekiel's vision of the waters issuing from the sanctuary, it is but "a little rill," which takes its rise at the south side of the altar, just where the blood of the sacrifices overflows. In the vision of Nebuchadnezzar it is represented by "a little stone," cut out of the mountain without hands; and in the New Testament we find our Saviour comparing it to "a grain of mustard-seed;" and how remarkable is the manner in which he introduces the comparison? "Unto what shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it?" as though nothing which came within the range of even his knowledge was sufficient to convey a correct idea of it to the mind. Again, he compares it to "a little leaven" hid in meal. In our text it is compared to "a handful of corn." Now, in all these metaphors there is an appropriateness, whether they be understood to describe the commencement of the gospel in the world, or in an individual.

1. *Look at its commencement in the world.*

It was heralded by one who had not his abode in cities, who was not of the honourable of the earth, either as to wealth or learning; but one of stern and forbidding aspect, as uncompromising in his principles as he was severe in his denunciations; one whom the evangelist describes as having his abode in the desert: his food—locusts and wild honey; his clothing—a girdle of camel's hair. And then, on the other hand, look at its *author*; a poor carpenter's son, belonging to the despised city of Nazareth; and to him he associates twelve of the poorest class of society. Yet to these twelve was committed the task of evangelizing the world. Without wealth, without friends, without power, without influence; in the face of opposition the most severe; unlearned and ignorant men; they nevertheless went forth on an enterprise the most noble and most mighty which the world ever saw.

2. *Look at the fewness of its doctrines, as illustrating the same point.*

Some men talk of various fundamental doctrines, doctrines which must be believed, or they who do not do so must be damned. The first preachers of the gospel went forth to proclaim a fact—that Jesus Christ had died for sinners—and from that fact they drew various inferences and urged various duties upon men; and

with these, as all that were necessary to accomplish their purpose, they went forth.

3. *In its commencement in the heart.*

How insignificant are some of the means made use of! Perhaps it is a single word dropped from the lips of a preacher; sometimes it is the sight of a word in the Bible; sometimes even a look is enough; sometimes many are awakened by merely seeing others in concern, as in the great revival at Kilsyth, a century ago.

II. ITS UNLIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS. "A handful of corn sown in the earth, on the top of the mountains."

If this whole earth were in a state of famine, and if there were but a handful of corn for the support of the myriads of its population, if from that handful of corn were to be raised those crops which were necessary for its sustenance, who would think of scattering it amongst the thin earth on the top of a mountain? How unlikely, how impossible for it to yield a crop there! Yet such is the figure employed to represent the gospel in the world.

This language may point out,

I. *The feebleness of its instrumentality.*

Soil found on the tops of mountains, both from its poverty and scarcity, would be a very unlikely instrument for yielding a crop of corn. So they who have been employed by God in diffusing the gospel, have not been such instruments as were likely in human estimation to accomplish its purposes. They have not been men of wealth, or of rank, or of talent, or of influence; but "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty;" he hath put the "treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God." The first preachers of the cross were a few fishermen, and they who have been its most successful ministers were almost invariably taken from the lower walks of life. There are of course exceptions; but as a rule, it is true that God has taken his ministry from the lowest of the people. *It is true in fact.* Who have been the most successful? The unlearned and ignorant. This point does not lose any of its weight, because the majority of those who have borne (usurped?) the name of Christian ministers in this country have been the younger sons of the wealthy, trained for it as a mode of obtaining a respectable living. As a fact it cannot be gainsaid, that those ministers who have had the seal of God to their call in the conversion of sinners, have been taken from the ranks of the poor. And, further, they who have been thus employed have not been men of great talent, gifted with superior oratorical powers, or of commanding intellect. It is true that there are always some men of this kind; but the majority are not, and never have been. They are generally men of plain mind and good common sense, and nothing more. How dull of apprehension, how sluggish in their concep-

tions, were the apostles, and yet these were the men destined to transform the world! And so it is still. It is not the man of extraordinary talent, it is not the man of powerful oratory, it is not the ~~man~~ of commanding intellect, who is the most successful in winning souls; but men who may be said to have hundreds in their congregations of superior mental endowments and qualifications to themselves.

This language may point out

2. *The difficulties it has to surmount.*

Corn sown on the top of a mountain would not be likely to yield a crop, on account of the adverse influences it would have to encounter. These would be of various kinds and from various sources. There would not only be the unfitness and scarcity of the soil itself; there would be the want of solar heat; besides which there would be its exposed situation, open to every current of air, and to all the storms of the sky; and, as mountains are the first to attract the clouds, the teeming rain would likely wash down both seed and soil to the base beneath.

The gospel, in its first promulgation among men, had to encounter many obstacles.

(1.) *It had to contend with long-established forms of error.*

Modes of religious worship, and various religious opinions, if handed down through successive generations, have a peculiar tendency to influence, and hold in subjection those who are trained in them, and if these are essentially erroneous, at the same time that they adapt themselves to man's corrupt nature, their influence is almost insurmountable. Now the gospel, in its first promulgation, had to encounter systems of superstition, which possessed a mighty influence over the minds of their votaries, because they had the argument of antiquity in their favour, and because they were the religious systems of their fathers.

(2.) *It had to encounter these errors in an age of great refinement.*

This was the Augustan age of literature. It was at this time that some of the greatest minds that ever adorned our planet were shedding the light of learning, philosophy, and poetry around them, much of which is resplendent to the present day. At this period there were schools of philosophy, each of which had its disciples, and which even to the present day form objects of study to those who delight in classic lore. How unlikely was the gospel to make progress in such an age as this! How likely was it to be what the apostle states as a fact, "to the Greek foolishness!" Yet this was the period chosen. This was the fulness of time.

(3.) *The enmity of man's nature is another obstacle which would then, as now, be presented to the progress of the gospel.*

There is nothing in the doctrines or duties of the gospel which is at all congenial to man's fallen nature. Its truths are foolish-

ness unto him. Its purity excites his enmity. Positive dislike to God and his truth is the paramount feeling of every human breast in its state of nature.

(4.) *There is against the gospel the combined powerful agency of the mighty and malicious prince of darkness and his numerous followers.*

This is a topic on which much might be said. It is a subject of frequent allusion to the early promoters of Christianity. But we pass on to notice, notwithstanding this unlikelihood of success,

III. ITS GLORIOUS RESULTS.

"The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."

These results are placed before us.

1. *In the fertility that attends it.*

Long before the personal mission of Christ, it was foretold that the "wilderness and the solitary place should be glad" for him. Wherever the waters of the gospel flow, it turns the wilderness into a fruitful field, and makes the desert as "the garden of the Lord." The dark places of the earth, which were filled with the habitations of cruelty, it makes light in the Lord, and they become the abodes of peace.

"Lovely tempers, fruits of grace,"

every where attend the proclamation of the gospel of peace.

2. *In the beauty that adorns it.* "Shake like Lebanon."

How beautiful the once desert waste, now that it is converted into the garden of the Lord! How beautiful the change which the gospel has effected in every place in which it has been introduced! It has been alike successful in demolishing callous systems of philosophy, and sanguinary superstition. Where are the cold systems of debasing idol worship of classic Greece, and other nations of antiquity? What has become of Druidism and its cruel rites, the religion of our Pagan ancestors? They are the things of the past. What are those buildings which rear their fronts where once Druid temples were erected? They are asylums for the wretched, the sick, the destitute, and the dying. And to what do we owe the change? To the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Witness its triumphs also in the islands of the South Sea, and in poor benighted Africa.

3. *In the triumphs which it is destined universally to accomplish.* "They of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth."

Count the numbers of the blades of grass which are spread over the surface of this earth of ours; you cannot! neither can you count the numbers of the future converts of Zion. This language may also point out its rapid progress in the latter day; grass is proverbially speedy in its growth. The triumphs of the gospel will very soon be equally rapid; "A nation born at once, and the earth made to bring forth in a day."

XXVI.

GOD THE DWELLING PLACE OF HIS PEOPLE.

PSALM xc. 1.—“ Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.”

I. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THIS CONFESSION ?

1. *A recognition of the unity of the church*—“ *our dwelling place.*”

There is a divine influence binding all Christians into one body. There may be great external diversities, but they possess the same life and the same privileges. Death itself shall not dissolve this fraternity. The body of Christ is eternal. From Abel down to the last saint that shall live on earth, all shall have a common interest in God.

2. *An expression of the experience of the church*—“ *thou hast been.*”

There was found no dwelling place in Paradise, nor in Egypt, nor in the wilderness, nor in Judea—for out of all these the church departed. There has been found no home in prosperity, nor in human favour; nor any in adversity and persecution. They have passed from all these. Nothing has been suited to them, nothing has met their desires or wants but God.

II. WHAT ARE THE PECULIARITIES OF THIS DWELLING PLACE ?

1. *It is a home of love.*

This indispensable quality of a desirable home is found in perfection here. It was the impulse of this that led him to call us to himself: “ I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” In the world we have found enmity; in ourselves, contention; in sin, misery; in God, always love.

2. *It is a home of purity.*

This only could make it a place of happiness. In him we have found the good and the true; we have found communion with the generous and the great. How often when perplexed by human advice we have come into the clear light of the divine presence, and obtained a discovery of duty! How often when entangled and perplexed by Satan we have gone to the feet of God, and found his illuminating holiness detect the lie!

3. *It is a home of eternal permanence.*

Every earthly blessing is shortlived. The best and holiest friends depart. Sanctuaries associated with our sweetest feelings change, or are left. Never was an absorbing attachment more permissible than that of the disciples to Christ's human presence; but that too was to vanish. God as a spiritual dwelling alone abides. What he was to patriarchs and prophets and apostles, that he is to us, and shall be to those who follow us. When time

shall be no more, he will remain the same. Eternity has in store no change. He is for ever and ever.

REMARKS.

1. *We have reason for great contrition.*

How little have we prized this home! We have dwelt with man; with the world, with ourselves. We have had too faint gratitude for the astounding honour and privilege of such a blessing.

2. *We should daily renew our dedication to God's service.*

By all we have done amiss, done imperfectly, or failed to do at all; by all God *is* unto us, *does* for us, and has *promised* to us, we should stir up our souls to serve and honour him.

C. M. B.

XXVII.

THE PENITENT'S DECISION.

PSALM cxix. 32.—“I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

The text is the language of a sinner, enlightened by the Spirit of God to a sense of his lost condition, in consequence of a sinful career. In the text we have,

I. A CONSCIOUSNESS OF DEFECTIVE OBEDIENCE.

It is astonishing the complacency with which a sinner regards his character and pursuits, before his eyes are enlightened by the Spirit of God. When that takes place, what a remarkable change is produced in his views and feelings! Enlightened by the Spirit of God to see his own sinfulness, his views of the purity and extent of the Divine law are much enlarged, and he is obliged to bring his judgment to acquiesce with the decision of the apostle, “The law is holy, just, and good.” It is not so with the unconverted sinner; he either thinks the law too strict, or God too severe, or else, that he does not mean what he says. On the other hand, he who is enlightened, feels that the law, like the gospel, emanates from the love of God; he sees impressed upon it the same benevolent aspect which shone resplendent amidst the mysteries of Calvary. He feels that God, in requiring his obedience, has studied only his good, and he is grieved at the heart for having grieved so good a God.

II. A CONVICTION OF THE SOURCE AND MEANS OF DELIVERANCE.

“When thou shalt enlarge my heart.”

“When *thou*,”—here is the source, the fountain of all spiritual good to men. “Shalt enlarge,”—here is the means. In the version of the Psalms contained in the Book of Common Prayer, it is rendered, “When thou hast set my heart *at liberty*,” as though the psalmist had said, “Lord, I see the way of the commandments

is yet open before me; it is a plain and easy way. Thou hast made me willing to run therein; but I have a load of guilt upon my head; I am tied and bound with the chain of my sins; I have a 'body of death' chained to me. O set me at liberty, and I will run the way of thy commandments!"

III. A FIRM DETERMINATION TO FUTURE OBEDIENCE. "*I will run.*"

The blessing of salvation, the setting of the soul at liberty, from the guilt, pollution, and power of sin, is given only to those who unite a firm determination to avoid sin, with an equal determination to obey.

T—R.

XXVIII.

THE DUTY OF CARING FOR SOULS.

PSALM cxlii. 4.—"No man cared for my soul."

The care of the soul is at once the most momentous and serious concern that can possibly arrest the attention, or occupy the thoughts, or interest the feelings, or call forth the exertions, of human beings in the present world. It is that which the Redeemer of men has so emphatically designated as the "one thing needful." Nor is it sufficient that we care only for our own souls; for the care of the souls of others is a duty of indispensable obligation. If we are not anxious for others to go to heaven, we have not much scriptural reason to hope that we shall get there ourselves.

Let us enquire,

I. WHAT IT IS TO CARE FOR THE SOULS OF OTHERS.

The care of the soul involves,

1. *A deep and heartfelt conviction of its worth.*

The care of an object is generally in proportion to its value: if that be trivial, little care is manifested; if that be great, what concern is felt! But who can sufficiently estimate the value of a human soul? a soul whose redemption price was the blood of the man who is Jehovah's fellow. The soul is spiritual in its nature, noble in its capacities, and eternal in its duration.

2. *A deep and thorough sense of the danger to which it is exposed.*

We are not in the habit of caring for that which is valuable, if it is secure; but here is an object of inestimable worth exposed to danger the most imminent—to a destruction the most severe. What words can express its danger, what pencil paint it? Alas! words are vain, and imagery inadequate, to convey an idea of the danger to which every unrenowned soul is momentarily exposed. Suspended on the brink of that gulf over which are ever rolling the boiling surges of hell fire, by the brittle thread of life, which a thousand accidents may break, and precipitate the soul into its furious waves.

3. *Tender solicitude for its welfare.*

Examples of tender solicitude for souls are not wanting in the inspired volume. We have a monarch exclaiming, "Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law!" And Jeremiah, who is sometimes styled the weeping prophet, joins in, "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" But if we want to see true solicitude for souls, we must look for its manifestation in the conduct of Him who, when he beheld the city, wept over it; of him who, travailing for souls, presented strong cries and tears to God, at the same time that he bedewed the ground with his own blood.

4. *Zealous exertion for their salvation.*

If love to souls really exist, it will manifest itself in ardent and continued effort to diffuse the knowledge of Christ among men. In every available way will such love be seen,—in solemn warning, affectionate entreaty, earnest prayer, and liberal contribution.

II. ON WHOM THIS DUTY DEVOLVES.

1. *It is incumbent on the heads of families.*

These hold a responsible position in the providential arrangements of our world. God will hold them, to a certain extent, accountable for the souls under their care.

2. *On all the members of the church.*

Collectively and individually. To these are committed the evangelization, not only of their own more immediate locality, but of the more remote places of the world.

3. *Pre-eminently on ministers.*

The "care of souls" is the minister's province. His studies in private, his discourses in public, his prayers, his visits, his time, his talents, ought all to be devoted to this subject.

III. THE GREAT EVIL OF NEGLECTING THIS DUTY.

1. *It is cruel.*

A man would be considered cruel who saw one of the "beasts that perish" in danger, who did not attempt its rescue. He is cruel, who, having it in his power to relieve the necessitous, or save the perishing, does not do it. But, ah! the cruelty of the man who, knowing the danger of souls, does not care for them, is beyond expression. Myriads are dying around us—we have a sovereign specific—it is in our power, nay, to us it is committed, to point them to an all-availing remedy—instead of doing so, we are listlessly inert! Slumbering while souls are perishing!

2. *It is ungrateful.*

If others had not cared for us, we must have perished. Ah! the tears, and sighs, and groans, and prayers, which our salvation has cost those who were messengers of mercy to us. And shall we refuse to feel and labour for those who are now what we were

once, and for whom the Saviour has, as well as for us, shed his own precious blood?

3. *It is criminal.*

We cannot neglect the salvation of others and be innocent. Disobedience to God, and cruelty to men, are joined in the neglecting to care for souls.

4. *It is fatal.*

Fatal to those who are perishing, and fatal to those who have a name to live. Fatal to all genuine piety, fatal to all ardent love to the Saviour's cause, fatal to zealous exertions by others, but especially fatal to our own souls.

N. .

XXIX.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE A JOURNEY.

PROV. xii. 28.—"In the way of righteousness is life."

The course of the believer from this world to the next is very often and very naturally represented in Scripture under the figure of a way, a pilgrimage, a march, a journey.

I take the term "life" as used in the text to signify happiness, and the whole proposition as affirming that the life-journey of the Christian is one of true blessedness.

Let me then enumerate some causes of a pleasant journey, and see whether they be not found in the one referred to.

I. THERE MUST BE A PEACEFUL MIND.

No route you can take in this world can be delightful if there be in your mind any disquietude. Tree, river, and mountain, beaming sun, and bespangled firmament, contribute their influence in vain, if you are inwardly miserable. But if your heart is peaceful, all around is so. It is thus with the Christian. He has his sorrows, it is true; but is it not also true that he has been relieved of the burden of unpardoned sin, that he has been set free from the curse of the law, and can look upon God with joy? Rom. viii. 1; v. 1. This makes all pleasant.

II. THERE MUST BE SUFFICIENT STRENGTH.

Where there is feebleness beneath the necessities of the case, there can be no satisfaction and no progress. With the believer it is not so. The way is arduous; he has much opposition and many adversaries, and no personal resources. But no sooner (like the two lepers who were cleansed as they went) does he start on his way, than he finds himself endued with "power from on high." He is supplied with a "hidden manna," by which his vigour is constantly renewed. "He" is with him who "giveth power to the faint," and who "to them who have no might," "increaseth strength." Isaiah xl. 29—31.

III. THERE MUST BE A CORRECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE ROAD.

For what is a joyous mind and continued strength if both be wasted on a wrong path? And if in any journey that ever is undertaken, there is danger of falling into error, it is in that which men take from this world to another. Some say, take the way of "doing your best," others tell you to turn to "God's goodness in forgetting sin," while others advise you to leave your soul in the hands of "the Church;" but the Christian has chosen Christ as the "way," as well as "the truth and the life." John xiv. 6. He who is the "Light of the world," shines on his path with a steady brightness, and none who follow that light shall perish.

IV. IT IS A GREAT ADVANTAGE TO HAVE IMPROVING COMPANIONS.

Whatever resources we may have in our own thoughts, a journey becomes tedious without improving companions. It is the privilege of those who walk in the way of the righteous, that they are accompanied by the best people of the age in which they live. Besides, there is the fellowship of Jesus himself. He does not reserve his presence for the end of the journey; he gives it to us all the way. He walks ever by our side, and we have only to withdraw our attention from surrounding objects, to find him. As the disciples journeying to Emmaus were favoured with him as a fellow-traveller (Luke xxiv. 32), so is every one of his people.

V. IT MAKES A JOURNEY EXCEEDINGLY PLEASANT TO HAVE A GLORIOUS PROSPECT.

The expectation of meeting with the cordial welcome of friends and kindred is delightful, and makes the distance appear short. Yet in common cases these hopes may end in disappointment. Perhaps the traveller may find some friend gone to eternity, perhaps with his friendship changed. But he who is going to heaven need dread no such painful alterations. The truth will there shine forth more brightly than ever, the "fellowship of the Father and of his Son" be sweeter than ever, and all his anticipations greatly exceeded. No secret sting shall accompany his joy; no drop of bitterness shall abate the sweetness of his cup. There shall be great and unutterable blessedness, and a state of sanctification rendering the soul capable of appreciating it.

APPLICATION.

1. *Have you who have not entered on this way, any good reason for refusal?*

Have you any better way? Have you a path that as certainly leads to bliss? That is impossible. There is but one way that leads to life, and in the pathway whereof there is no death. That is the way of the "righteousness of God in Christ Jesus." Therefore, as you prize your soul, choose this way.

2. *Why should true Christians yield to fear?*

You are often troubled by many things. Sometimes sin terrifies you, sometimes the cares of the world overwhelm you. But

you may find all in him who has promised to conduct you safely. Cleave fast to him. Be like him. Walk with him. So shall your soul live.

XXX.

MAN IN HIS ORIGINAL AND IN HIS FALLEN CONDITION.

ECCLES. vii. 29.—“Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.”

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon records the unsuccessful results of his search after happiness and truth. Of one truth, however, he becomes perfectly convinced, viz., “That God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” This assertion contains two distinct propositions:—

I. GOD MADE MAN UPRIGHT.

This refers to the nature of man as he was originally created. The nature of our first parents when they were formed in the image of God. Now the word *upright* or *righteous* signifies, literally, conformable to rule, which rule in the case of man is evidently the *law of God*. Man, then, was created in a state of perfect conformity to the law of God, which state of conformity implies,—

1. *An understanding perfectly acquainted with the divine law.*

This is self-evident, since no one can regulate his conduct by a law of which he is ignorant. While, therefore, man remained in his original state, he had such a complete knowledge of truth and falsehood that it was impossible for him to transgress ignorantly.

2. *A memory which perfectly retains all its precepts.*

This also is self-evident. We cannot regulate our conduct by a law which is not remembered any more than if it did not exist. As wax, therefore, retains the impression of the seal, so did the mind of man originally retain the impress of the law; he could not consequently err through forgetfulness.

3. *A conscience which always faithfully applies the law.*

The office of conscience is to apply to our conduct the rule which is given to it, and to pass sentence upon us according to that rule. The rule which guided the conscience of man at the creation was the law of God; and this rule it faithfully applied.

4. *A heart which perfectly loves the law.*

This was indispensably necessary; for the affections are the ruling faculty of the soul, and will sooner or later subdue and lead captive all the other faculties. If duty be not loved it will not be long discharged; besides, there can be no obedience to God with-

out love. As long therefore as man loved, he could not transgress the divine law by choice or design.

5. *A will perfectly obedient and submissive to the law.*

This necessarily results from a heart which loves the law. The understanding discovers objects with the consequences of pursuing or avoiding them; the heart chooses or refuses these objects; and then the will resolves either to pursue or avoid them, according to the inclination of the heart.

6. *An imagination presenting nothing but chaste and proper images.*

The imagination is the faculty by which the images or ideas of absent sensible objects is presented to the mind. Now this faculty presented to the mind of man in his original state nothing but images of beauty and purity; no vain reveries, or worthless and sinful fancies.

Thus, God made man upright; but,

II. THEY HAVE SOUGHT OUT MANY INVENTIONS.

1. *They have invented new ways to walk in*, forsaking the good old path in which God originally placed them: for instance, the innumerable paths by which men pursue happiness, and the various forms of false religion in the world.

2. *They have invented innumerable false gods and idols.*

So the prophet Jeremiah says—"My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which hold no water."

3. *They have ceased to be conformed to the divine law.*

Thus, some make the fluctuating standard of opinion their only guide; some, the authority of an admired author or character; a very few, like Paul, their own conscience or sense of duty, unenlightened by God's revealed will.

The consequences of this pursuit of new ways is, that the understanding becomes darkened, and mistakes error for truth; the memory enfeebled, forgetting God and his law; the conscience neglects to apply the law of God to our conduct; the heart no longer loves God; and the will is perverted and depraved. The imagination also is filled with impure images, debasing even the great and good by its mean and grovelling conceptions.

APPLICATION.

1. The vanity of all excuses and justifications for our sinful conduct.

2. The necessity of the restoration to our lost original condition through Jesus Christ.

XXXI.

MAN'S NATURE AND DESTINY.

ECCLES. xii. 7.—“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

How exceedingly thoughtless is man respecting every thing that has reference to his future existence! He is not inattentive to those futurities which are, as he fancies, some way or other connected with his present joys. He will do much to secure while living, a good opinion of himself when dead; he will strive to embalm his name, that it may last through coming generations. He endeavours to fix his family so, that his name may be borne by bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, when he himself is mouldering in the dust; but how little attention is bestowed on the future of his deathless spirit!

Why is this? How is it that man is taken up with that which is perishable, to the neglect of that which is immortal? The cause is a moral one, and is to be sought for in that depraved condition into which the fall of our progenitors has thrown us.

Our text divides itself into two parts—man's nature and destination.

I. MAN'S NATURE.

It is compound. He consists of two very different substances, a mortal body, and a deathless spirit. During this life these two are mysteriously united in one. Such was his original formation; so he came out of the hands of the Almighty, who made him of the dust of the ground, and who breathed into him a living soul.

It would be delightful to dwell on the wisdom and the goodness of God in the structure of the material system, and to show how exactly all the organs in that system are suited to the operations of the indwelling spirit. But we cannot avoid the thought, that it is dust. It may decay by age; it may be injured, or destroyed by force; there is no dependence on its continuance. Man is dust. This is humiliating. All the excellence of man resides in his immortal spirit. It is not the eye which sees; it is not the ear which hears. The organization will remain the same till dissolution, till putrefaction, take place; there will be the same exquisitely beautiful formation of the eye, the same adaptation of the ear, the same system through the whole: but there will be no power; the eyes will not see, the ears will not hear. The fallen jaw, the cold marble face, the senseless expression, prove that the vital principal is gone. Yes, there is a spirit in man; and oh, how noble is that spirit, contemplated apart from the desolating influence of sin; contemplated when it shone in the beauty of its original form—a spirit breathed from God—God's own offspring!

II. MAN'S DESTINATION.

1. *The preacher teaches us the resolution of the material part of man into its original dust.*

How difficult it is to prevail on man to contemplate his own dissolution; yet there is no point of view in which man can be contemplated that will give to his spirit admonitory lessons of instruction more powerful, more practical, and more permanent, than the study and contemplation of his dissolution, his departure from this world. There is a beautiful description of what may precede this departure in the verses in connexion with our text. In the imagery here employed, there is an exact adaptation to the relation in which the spirit stands to its decaying tenement. Experience brings her aid to the assertion of the Royal Preacher; dulness in the eye, slow apprehension in the ear, feebleness in the step, are all indications that the habitation is about to be forsaken, that this tabernacle of clay is about to sink into its native dust.

This dissolution is certain. It forms as much a part of the physiology of the system, as does its growth and nourishment. It is the present law of all animal existence—a law which has never been interrupted but in two most memorable instances; a law which has, in proof of its certainty, not only the word of the Great Being who established it, but the uniform testimony of the whole earth through all time.

It may be sudden. It frequently is so. Without any previous warning the stroke falls on the prepared and unprepared.

2. *The return of the spirit to its Creator.*

There is something not only solemn, but deeply mysterious in death. What is death? Philosophy has in vain tried to answer the question. It is beyond her province; she can no more grapple with the question than she can tell us what is spirit. Both are alike out of her reach. It is from the word of inspiration alone, that we can get any thing satisfactory to the mind on this theme. Here we learn that death is the separation of the immortal spirit from the mortal body. The tenement, when the spirit has fled, is mere clay; it may have a beautiful form, it may retain all those marks of design and skill which its great Creator first impressed there: but it is mere clay; you might as well talk to the statue chiselled out of the block of marble as to it—the spirit is fled to God.

What is death—the death of the spirit? It is everlasting separation from God. Its departure from its mortal habitation for the presence of its Creator, is to have its destiny fixed for ever. "Prepare to meet thy God."

XXXII.

THE OPPRESSED SOUL SEEKING THE DIVINE INTERPOSITION.

ISAIAH xxxviii. 14.—“O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.”

These words compose part of a Psalm written by Hezekiah, king of Judah, upon his miraculous recovery from a dangerous disease. Brought to the very brink of the grave, and fearing the prospect of death, he cried feebly,—“O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me:” that is—be my help and deliverer, make my cause thine own. We all, like Hezekiah, need the divine interposition to save us from misery and ruin. Let us then consider:—

I. THAT ALL OF US NEED SOME ONE TO UNDERTAKE FOR US—THAT IS, TO MAKE OUR CAUSE HIS OWN.

1. *We need support under the trials of life.*

The trials and afflictions of life are numerous. Loss of friends, companions, relatives, children: unworthy conduct of children: pecuniary losses and disappointments: sickness, decline, and extinction of faculties: successful rivalry: disease, and death. Support under these can only be derived from God.

2. *We need a guide through life.*

Passion, prejudice, and evil example, lead men astray; and we need therefore a guide even to secure our happiness in this life. The young have to choose associates, friends, partners in business, and perhaps partners for life. A wrong choice may embitter the whole life. Unless, then, we have a divine guide, we have neither security nor guarantee for temporal happiness. Still more is such a guide requisite for the future life. Passion, inclination, and prejudice, lead us astray in our enquiry after truth. The search is hindered by a thousand disturbing influences within and without, and therefore we need a divine counsellor and guide.

3. *We need some one to plead our cause with God, and effect a reconciliation between us and him.*

We are all sinners. We have broken the law of God, and we are therefore condemned. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” Rom. iii. 20. “In thy sight shall no man living be justified.” Ps. cxliii. 2. We need, therefore, some one to plead for us, to undertake our cause, and procure our pardon.

II. JESUS CHRIST ALONE IS BOTH ABLE AND WILLING TO UNDERTAKE FOR US.

1. *He is able;* for he is both God and man. As God, he is omniscient and omnipresent, and he is therefore able to guide and

teach millions of beings in various parts of the world ;—almighty, and he is therefore able to bring them safely through all difficulties and dangers ;—infinite in goodness, and therefore he consents to undertake for unworthy and perverse creatures. As man, he can sympathize with us ; for “he was touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Heb. iv. 15. As man, he was able to make an atonement for our sins by perfectly obeying the law, and by dying for us. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Heb. ii. 14.

2. *He is willing.* He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matt. xi. 28. “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” John vi. 37.

APPLICATION.

1. Exhortation to the unconverted to come to Christ.
2. Warning to those who have only a dead faith.

P.

XXXIII.

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR.

ISAIAH lxi. 2.—“To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.”

That the whole passage is a prophetic description of the gospel dispensation is evident, from its application by our Saviour to himself in the synagogue at Nazareth, as recorded in Luke iv. That there is an allusion in the phraseology of our text to the year of jubilee amongst the Jews, is equally evident, and is demonstrative of the typical character of that institution. We have in the text,

1. AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PERIOD OF GOD’S WILLINGNESS TO SAVE.

This announcement supposes,

- I. *That God has made provision for our salvation.*

Our present condition and our future prospects are big with wretchedness and misery. Our sins have exposed us to the wrath of Almighty God ; we are by nature the children of wrath—over our heads hangs the curse of the broken law ; but God “commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Around the subject of reconciliation with God there were many difficulties. Obstacles to man’s salvation presented themselves on every hand. Many things required adjusting. Human salvation must not be accomplished by the

sacrifice of any attribute of God. Just as there were difficulties to be overcome in the appointment of the year of jubilee—just as God had to take into consideration in that institution how the good of one was not to be advanced to the injury of another—so, in making provision for our salvation, no one attribute of his nature was to be exalted over another; and in the actual adjustment of contending claims we have “mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissing each other.” Here we have exhibited to our view, “a just God and Saviour.” Here we have the solution of the problem, how God could be just and the justifier of the ungodly. “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

2. *This announcement assures us that God is willing to save us.*

Some men are held back from Christ by the impression, that their sins are so numerous and aggravated as to prevent their forgiveness. Our text assures us of God’s willingness to save—it is the acceptable year of the Lord. When the jubilee was sounded through Israel, no power, no individual, could prevent a slave from becoming free—nothing but his own choice. So it is here. No one in the universe of God can prevent the salvation of the sinner, if he be willing to be saved on God’s terms. God himself has provided salvation, and, to encourage the sinner to come, he has thrown out many signal flags of mercy. Listen to Him! “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Listen to Him! “Come, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” Listen to Him! “Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

3. *To convince us of his willingness to save, he employs various agencies to awaken and bring us to himself.*

One great agency which he employs is the preaching of the gospel. He has appointed this for the very purpose of saving men. He does not commission men to preach, he does not thrust out labourers into his vineyard, merely that your time may be occupied, or that your judgments should be informed, much less that you should criticise his truth. Whatever may be your motives in listening to the gospel, however you may treat it or its messengers, the design of God in it and by it is to save you. Of this you ought to be aware, that the design of *every* sermon is your salvation. We do not now speak of the preacher’s design, but of His design from whom the preacher receives his commission.

Another great agency employed is the Holy Spirit. All other means are powerless and worthless without this; no means, however well adapted they may appear, are of any avail in the

salvation of the lost, unless they are attended by the power of the Spirit. He is the great agent; other means are but the instruments which he employs to work out his own great purposes. Wherever there is any effect under the gospel, it is owing to the presence and personal influence of the Holy Spirit. Under the ministration of his truth, he strives with and awakens the sinner: that light which is now flashing on your conscience, and that influence which is now causing you to tremble, is the sign of the presence and working of the Almighty Spirit.

These agencies are employed frequently. Had you but one offer of mercy, and were but once the subjects of the awakening of the good Spirit, there would be sufficient to convince you of God's willingness to save; but he commendeth his love to you, in retaining the attitude of beseeching tenderness through years of stout-hearted rebellion, contemptuous indifference, and obstinate resistance.

4. *This announcement implies that God has fixed a period to the offer of these blessings.*

"An acceptable year." If the Israelite would secure his deliverance from servitude, and his reinstatement in his possessions, he must make the application before the close of the year of jubilee. So with the sinner that would secure the blessings of the gospel. He must get possession of them while they are available, before the period of mercy terminates. That period is compared to a year.

This year lasts with some to the close of life: but how long will your life last? It may be taken away from you any moment; it depends on the very Being against whom you are spending it in rebellion. What is your life? It is like the passing cloud, appearing for a moment, and passing away.

This year may close before your life ends. You may not think so; you may be of the same opinion with the writer of the oft-quoted lines—lines which contain more of rhyme than scriptural truth,

"Long as the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

If the Spirit of God forsake a sinner, that sinner will not return; and no man can guarantee the continuance of that Spirit till death. God has warned us not to quench nor grieve the Spirit. And the Spirit has told us of a time in which, though we call, he will not answer. In fact, the whole phraseology of Scripture goes to confirm the view now taken. "Seek ye the Lord *while* he may be found." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

II. THE APPALLING CONDITION OF THOSE WHO LET THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR EXPIRE WITHOUT EMBRACING ITS PROVISIONS. "The day of vengeance of our God."

1. *Their doom will be severe.*

Vengeance! a term which implies the utmost severity; a term which presents ideas to the mind of the most thrilling description. The vengeance of the God of love—of the God of mercy; the vengeance of the Author of Salvation, "the wrath of the Lamb!" It implies that there will be no mitigation of the penalty. The cup of righteous indignation will be unmixed; as their sin is, so will be their punishment. They have despised the richness of his goodness and forbearance, and now they must have a severer punishment than to perish without mercy. Incensed mercy will draw the sword, and guide its downward stroke on the impenitent soul.

2. *That doom may be sudden.*

A very short time may be suffered to intervene betwixt the close of "the acceptable year" and "the day of vengeance." "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed."

3. *It is certain.*

The word of God asserts it: the word of one who cannot lie, and has power to inflict it. The *delay* of vengeance is no argument against it. It is the long-suffering of God that delays it, that his goodness may lead men to repentance.

This certainty is not affected by the *extent* to which vengeance will be taken. Nations will be turned into hell. Successive generations have gone there. Myriads are already food for the undying worm, are fuel for the unquenchable fire. Ah! do not flatter yourself, that because so many have perished there is a chance for your escape. Oh! be ye not deceived; the numbers of the damned will add to the intensity of suffering, but cannot diminish the certainty.

This certainty will not be affected by the *severity* of this vengeance. The severity of suffering presents no reason to God against its infliction. What means that wide-spreading earthquake? What means the destruction of the cities of the plain? Why was the guilty population of the world destroyed in the deluge? Why did the *Son of God* struggle in the agonies of death? Why, to teach you that God will strike you if impenitent.

One word more. If this day of vengeance reaches you, the flame of your torment cannot be quenched by oceans of tears; the duration will not end in millions of years.

XXXIV.

CHRISTIAN TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Isaiah lxi. 3. Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

In the beginning of this chapter the Messiah is introduced as the speaker, and these verses relate to his personal ministry, and the tendency and effects of his gospel. He ascribes to the Holy Spirit those qualities with which he was endowed as a man, and led "to preach glad tidings to the meek." "He," saith he, "hath sent me to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" and why? that they might be called, "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." We have thus:

I. CHRISTIANS UNDER THE FIGURE OF TREES.

This suggests three things—

(1) *Life*. The tree differs from many things in a landscape, in that it has the principle of life. The rock is sublime, but it has no life—the river imparts an air of animation, but it has no life—the ocean subserves great ends, but it has no life—but the tree grows from feebleness to strength, and the children's children of those who plucked its leaves repose under its shade. In like manner, all men are spiritually dead except the Christian. "He" only "who hath the Son hath life."

(2) *Beauty*. How sterile any landscape appears from which all trees are absent, and how much enriched is any scene by their presence! The world was equally devoid of what was lovely and great in character until Christianity came. Even the ungodly acknowledge that a consistent Christian is lovely. Men of old exclaimed, "Behold how they love each other!"

(3) *Utility*. The tree which the prophet had in view (for the term is specific) was the terebinth, or what has been called the oriental oak—a tree as famous for its important uses as for the majesty of its form. It is not merely an appeal to the eye which a Christian makes. Let a single Christian live consistently in a family, and that family is the better for him; let there be in a country a body of consistent and holy followers of Christ, and the manners and usages of that country will become quickly improved. It is to the Christian the world has to look for the means of its renovation. Philosophy and science and literature have failed: the cross alone can be successful.

II. THE LORD AS THE CREATOR OF THE CHRISTIAN EXCELLENCES.

"The planting of the Lord."

1. *He gave him spiritual life.*

We were first planted in Paradise, but sin outrooted us, and we lay withering and dying, ready to be cast into the fire; nor could

any human, angelic, or other finite power restore us. It was in his mind to destroy or to save us. He chose to save us: to send his only Son to die that we might live. He planted us in him, and gave us new and eternal life. "Ye are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus."

2. *He supplies him with the means of growth.*

When he has taken the tree and planted it in his pleasant places, he does not forget to cultivate it. What stores of instruction in the Bible; what direction and guidance in Providence; what variety of trials and temptations, suited to his changing state, are supplied! "Every branch in me which beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

3. *He bestows upon him the power of sanctification.*

All instruction in scripture, in the ministry, and in providence, would fall like rain upon the hard stone were it not for accompanying grace. But, saith Jehovah, "I will be as the dew unto Israel," nay, more copiously still shall his blessing come: Isaiah xliv. 1—4; and see the connection of a right situation with abundant fruitfulness: Psalm i. 1—3.

XXXV.

NECESSITY OF IMPROVING GOSPEL OPPORTUNITIES.

JER. viii. 20.—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Whatever may have been the application of these words to Israel, we are constrained to consider them as descriptive of the actual condition of many in our own country, of numbers in every congregation, who once had opportunities of salvation, but from whom all hope is now for ever departed, and who are kept waiting for the vengeance of eternal fire. The text teaches us that such persons have had seasons of mercy, and that for their present condition they have no excuse. This will be evident if we consider,

I. THE MEANS WHICH HAVE BEEN USED TO AWAKEN AND SAVE THEM.

They have had from God,

1. *The teachings of his gospel.*

By this they have been taught the necessity of salvation; from it they might have learned the depravity of their nature, their inability to effect its change, their exposure to the wrath of God, and how unavailing are all human efforts to escape therefrom.

The Gospel teaches further, that man is not left to the consequences of his condition and guilt, but that, on the contrary, help has been laid on one who is "mighty to save," he having borne our iniquities. Concerning the method of this salvation, the gospel also affords instruction: it not only informs us of that which God has done for us, but also of what he expects from us—an entire abandonment of sin, and a believing reliance on the atonement.

2. *Warnings of Providence.*

God warns men by dreadful calamities, of accident, of storm, of poverty, of fire; by sickness in their own person, or in the persons of their friends; by death in their families, of parents, partners, or children.

3. *Influence of the Holy Spirit.*

From this Spirit proceeds conviction of the evil and hazard of sin. Few, if any, sin ignorantly; none without warning from the Spirit. He powerfully draws men from sin, restrains them in sin, and offers aid to resist sin.

II. THE GRACIOUS SEASONS AFFORDED TO THEM.

1. *There was the season of youth.*

When their minds were unhardened by the long practice of sin; when they were free from the operation of vicious habit. In youth they had special promises, and special encouragement to turn to God; things which the aged have not.

2. *The season of affliction.*

Seasons of affliction, however distressing, are intended by their sender to be the means of spiritual benefit. They afford opportunity for solemn enquiry; they remind us of our relations to God, to time, to eternity. By them, if rightly used, the heart is softened, the will subdued, the mind humbled. There are few but have been favoured with such seasons; there are many by whom they have passed by unimproved.

3. *Seasons of special grace.*

Nations and individuals have these visitations. There is scarcely an individual who has not been the subject of what are called the extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit. They have been felt in seasons of suffering, under the ministry of the word, in the ordinances of religion. On such occasions they have been filled with fear, roused to concern, melted into contrition. Such visitations have not been few; they have been repeated again and again, but in the case before us, without effect.

III. THE GRIEVOUS RESULT.

The truth asserted is, that it is possible for seasons of mercy to pass away, and leave man a stranger to salvation.

1. *The word of God asserts it.*

There are few truths so explicitly revealed. It was declared in an early age of the world, prior even to the deluge. It is found in the frequent warnings given to the children of Israel by

Moses, by Solomon, by the prophets. "O Israel, *what shall I do unto thee?*"

2. *Facts establish it.*

Look at the old world: the men of that generation were striven with, a hundred and twenty years; but the flood came after all.—Look at Jerusalem in the days of the Redeemer: it was blessed with his personal ministry; yet he wept over it, and pronounced that its season of mercy was gone. He spared it for years, favoured it with many outpourings of his Spirit; but all was of no avail: it was destroyed. Look at the aged, who have been from infancy in the way of being saved, but of whom there is now no hope. Look at all who have been for a long time listeners to the gospel, without experiencing its saving power; and you find them untouched by its threatenings, unmoved by its offered mercy.

To each unsaved sinner we must say, that if your condition has not now been described, yet it is the condition to which you are hastening. O consider before it be too late; let me call upon you,

1. *To make a serious enquiry into your real condition.*

To assist you to do this, allow me to remind you that your present state is one of guilt, of misery, and of danger.

2. *To the exercise of true repentance.*

Reflect on the worth of your soul, the misery to which it is hastening, the awful doom which awaits it unsaved. Think of the glorious salvation to which you are invited, the means by which it has been obtained, and the freeness with which it is offered. Call to remembrance your long neglect, your actual refusals, your oftentimes resistance of the Holy Spirit, and turn at once, call now upon God.

3. Allow me affectionately to warn you, that your privileges are passing away, your destiny will soon be unalterably fixed; if you go on as you are, your path will terminate in hell.

N—R.

XXXVI.

THE BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE OF EARLY PIETY ON OLD AGE.

Daniel vi. 28.—"So this Daniel prospered."

Who would have supposed that it would have been so with one of those four young men who entered that vast city, strangers and captives? You would have supposed they would have been swept away by the tide of gaiety, pomp, and pollution with which that heathen court abounded, and so have been destroyed and forgotten. Or if you conceived them as remaining firm to the faith

and maxims of their fathers, you would have pronounced them on the wrong road to temporal success and exaltation; for how was it likely that an idolatrous and licentious people would have had patience with such scrupulous virtue? Yet it came to pass that this youth did attain to the highest eminence, and that through the medium of his piety. The fact deserves attention; for it proves that that which is right is also advantageous, that the path of duty is the path to honour. Early piety is productive of prosperous age.

I. BECAUSE IT INSPIRES THE MIND WITH INTELLIGENCE.

The fountain of a man's prosperity and the seat of his happiness is his mind. If that is uncultivated he cannot be blessed. While it is true much may be accomplished by the topics of common education, the higher susceptibilities of the nature are never called out until there be a perception of God through Jesus Christ. It is then only that is known what it is essential for an immortal creature to know. It is then only that, centring on an adequate object, all the powers of the soul are called out; the knowledge of God calls forth the intellectual faculties and expands the affections. Not only are wondrous things beheld in the divine law, but by the light derived from that, all other things are made intelligible and full of instruction. The book of providence—the book of creation—the book of the heart—are all tributary to the improvement of such a mind.

II. BECAUSE IT PRESERVES THE SOUL FROM MANY DESOLATING SINS.

The grand contest between the Spirit and the flesh begins early. If a man falls, do you suppose when he is recovered it is with him as if he had never fallen? No, he is permanently injured. Do you suppose the sins of youth leave no scars on the conscience, no stains on the heart, no corrupting influences on the imagination! If you do, you are mistaken. It is not in the nature of the human mind, nor in the nature of the operations of the Holy Spirit, to admit of so complete a restoration as that no humiliating consequences remain. "Thou wast a God that forgavest their iniquity, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions." It is therefore of unutterable consequence to be early sanctified, and so preserved from the "corruption that is in the world." Though Christ saved the worst of sinners, yet he chose as his friends and disciples only those who had early separated themselves from the world. Daniel's principles were formed before he left his fatherland, and so he remained unstained by the gross pollutions of Babylon, even to old age.

III. BECAUSE IT SURROUNDS A MAN WITH THE FRUITS OF HIS USEFULNESS.

There is nothing sweeter than to look back on a life spent in seeking the true welfare of man. What is the worth of the objects which generally engage men's thoughts? Supposing all

they aspired to—the wealth—the influence—the applause, were gained—how would their conquests look in the light of eternity?

Would they not have to exclaim with the learned man (Grotius) at the close of life: "I have spent my days in laboriously doing nothing." But when one starts upon the right course in early life, choosing the proper objects, and expending the energies with true wisdom, the past is contemplated with satisfaction in the fruits of the present. Daniel, after a life of diligence and consistency, found a response, not only in the silence of his enemies, but in the approval of the king, and in the issue of a proclamation in favour of the true God among benighted nations.

IV. BECAUSE IT GIVES, AT A DYING HOUR, AN ESTABLISHED PEACE.

There is a beauty of its own pertaining to the departure from this life of a young Christian, of one who has known little of temptation and of sorrow; but there is an interest of a deeper kind in the translation of a believer who in many a conflict has found protection under the shield of the Almighty, and sheltered behind the Rock of ages. It is exhilarating to see a ship even after a short voyage glide into port; but were the vessels which have been bound in arctic seas for many dreadful years, though battered and bruised, to enter an haven, how much deeper would be your wonder and gratitude! It was delightful to hear Christ say to the thief, "To day," &c., but impressive to hear Paul the aged say, "I am now ready to be offered," &c. This early and consistent piety provides for its possessor.

APPLICATION:

1. Young Christians, hold on to the end.
2. Worldly youth, see how great your loss.

XXXVII.

INCONSTANCY IN RELIGION.

HOSEA vi. 4.—"Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

There are in scripture many striking allusions to the dew. It is most frequently used as a symbol of spiritual blessings. "I will be," says the Lord, "as the dew unto Israel;" "My speech," says Moses, "shall distil as the dew." But in this verse it is applied, together with the morning cloud which accompanied it, to transient religious impressions. In the morning all the herbage, sparkled with a thousand drops, awakening cheering expectations in the breast of the husbandman; but as the sun rose in the sky this hopeful moisture was exhaled, every blade drooped, and every flower withered. The clouds, too, which greeted the wakeful eye of the tiller of the ground as he took his early walk among his

fields, promising him as the day advanced a refreshing shower, gradually dissolved in the firmament, or sailed away before the breeze, "Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds." Jude. How similar is this to the goodness of many that lasts for a short time, awakens many hopes and then vanishes away, leaving the gazer plunged in bitter disappointment! Let us consider the fact and the causes of religious inconstancy.

I. THE FACT OF RELIGIOUS INCONSTANCY.

It has appeared often in the people of God. The Israelites, who were all zeal when they shouted their triumph on the shore of the Red Sea, soon murmured and rebelled. Peter vowed with great decision that he would serve Christ, whereas before the morning dawned he could scarcely be distinguished from his enemies. The Galatians, who were so devoted to the gospel and to Paul that few equalled them, were soon "hindered." Many who have had deep impressions from the preaching of the word, who have gone home and earnestly read a neglected Bible, who have wept over their sins, and pleaded hard for their lives, have gone back again, plunging into the world, and forgetting all they once experienced.

II. THE CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS INCONSTANCY.

1. *The influence of companions.*

Who made the Israelites think of the golden calf? Those Egyptians among whom they had dwelt so many years, and those who had accompanied them in their flight into the wilderness. When was it that Peter was overcome? When in the presence of his Saviour? No. When with his fellow disciples? No. But when in the company of the High Priest's servants. So it was when you met a worldly friend; when you went to a gay entertainment; when you ceased to cultivate the fellowship of Christians, that your piety pined and decayed.

2. *Imperfect knowledge.*

When impressions arise only from vivid appeals and striking outward events, they soon fall away. When the causes depart, they depart. But when they prompt the mind to farther enquiry, when they lead to an acquaintance with the way of salvation, they become permanent. Saul of Tarsus was awakened by striking events, but he went by faith into the presence of Christ, and though the light no longer shone, nor the voice any more was heard, he felt deeply his condition as a sinner. Of which class have been your feelings? Since they have passed away, it is evident they were not founded on a full and sufficient knowledge of divine truth.

3. *An unchanged heart.*

A man may sometimes act unlike himself. He may for a time appear to possess a character which he has not. Herod was moved by the preaching of John, but continued in sin. Felix trembled before Paul, but did not reform his life. What was

wanting in these cases? A change of heart—that is, of the inmost principles of the character. “Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again.” There is nothing done in religion until there be “a new creation,” through the power of the Holy Ghost.

APPLICATION :

1. Those who are under serious impressions should tremble lest they depart. Conviction is not conversion. Use this solemn season for drawing near to God. Hoist every sail to catch the gracious breeze. Christ waits to be gracious. He is full of willingness to receive and to redeem the soul.

2. Those who have no serious impressions may stand astonished at their position. They are on the brink of eternity ; in the presence of the Judge without preparation ! Let them ponder their state, and they will see what reason they have for alarm, and what need for instant repentance.

XXXVIII.

SINNERS IN ZION DESCRIBED AND DOOMED.

AMOS vi. 1.—“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.”

The inspired writers never pronounce a blessing, or denounce a woe, without describing the character to whom it belongs. The prophet here denounces a woe against those who are at ease in Zion. Let us then examine,

I. THE CHARACTERS INTENDED.

The characters here mentioned are described as being “*at ease in Zion*.” Now, since the word Zion was applied to the whole Jewish nation professing to worship God, we may apply it to all who are members of a nation, or community, by which the true God is professedly known and worshipped. What, then, is meant by being *at ease in Zion*? To be in a state of indifference to religion, or false security. All persons are spiritually at ease when they feel neither sorrow nor alarm on account of their sins ; when they are seldom troubled by admonitions of conscience ; when they are unconcerned respecting their future destiny ; in a word, when they are not engaged in working out their salvation with fear and trembling, but feel safe, quiet, and secure. Now these may be divided into three classes.

1. *Those who are persuaded that the punishment with which sinners are threatened will never be inflicted.*

Such are unbelievers, who scornfully reject the word of God—atheists, who deny his existence—materialists, who deny the immortality of the soul—universalists, who believe in the final salvation of all men.

2. *Those who believe that sinners are punished, but do not consider themselves to be sinners.*

These persons know nothing of the extent and spirituality of the law, consequently they know nothing of the extent of their transgression. They judge of themselves by the lax and fluctuating standard of human opinion, and, finding little to condemn in their own conduct according to this rule, they think themselves quite secure, and are "*at ease in Zion.*"

3. *Those who acknowledge that they are sinners, but imagine that they shall in some way or other escape the punishment which their sins deserve.*

Some of these trust to a future repentance; such, for instance, was Felix. Others entertain a false and groundless persuasion that they have already become pious, obtained the pardon of their sins, and secured the favour of God.

II. THE WOE WHICH IS DENOUNCED AGAINST THEM.

1. *Woe unto them, because the ease which they feel proves that they belong to the number of the wicked.*

They are either careless sinners, or self-deluded hypocrites. The man who has to take up his cross daily, and work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, cannot be at ease.

2. *Woe unto them, because they are sinners of no common stamp.*

Since they abuse the greatest privileges, resist the most pressing motives, and violate the most important obligations.

3. *Woe unto them, because there is little reason to hope that they will ever repent.*

They are at ease in Zion, where the terrors of the law, and the hopes of the gospel, have been alike inefficient to arouse them from their fatal slumber;—how, then, can we hope that these terrors or hopes will ever move them, when their force is lost by habitually falling upon their ears, without producing any impression?

APPLICATION :

1. To slumbering professors.
2. To the openly impenitent.

P.

XXXIX.

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT.

MICAH ii. 7.—"Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Some understand by the expression "Spirit of the Lord," the power of God; but we understand it to refer to the "effectual worker" in human salvation, the Holy Spirit.

I. PUT THE ENQUIRY IN VARIOUS DIRECTIONS.

"Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

1. *As to place.*

Can He act but in one place? Is He confined to one locality? No. In ten thousand places at the same moment, in ten thousand consciences at the same instant, his presence and power may be felt. Time was when the Spirit was local, when he had a special dwelling place on this earth; but now all earth is a place of prayer, and in every place the Spirit works.

2. *As to means.*

Is the Spirit of God confined to one instrument? No. He can work with or without means, though he graciously uses instrumentality of all kinds, sometimes the most glorious results being produced by the most unlikely instrument. Our duty is to use means, with vigour, with care, with earnestness; but we must use such as are sanctioned by the word of God.

3. *By the opposition of men.*

Oh! why will men oppose the Spirit of God, why engage in so unequal a controversy? Men must either bend or break. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but let not men strive with their Maker. Men may, men do combine against the Spirit; but it is like an infant struggling in the grasp of a giant, or a feather endeavouring to resist the force of a hurricane. "The mighty ones of the earth may take counsel against the Lord's anointed; but he that sitteth in the heavens, shall break them with a rod of iron."

4. *In his compassions.*

Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened in his compassion towards his people? Does he not bear with their infirmities—does he not promise them assistance? Is he straitened towards the penitent? The peculiar sin of a state of ungodliness is presumption; that of the penitent is despondency. But why should they despond? Their concern is the result of the operation of the Spirit; and is he now straitened? Has he brought to the birth, and will he not give power to bring forth?

II. NOTICE SOME OF THE PRACTICAL LESSONS WHICH MAY BE DRAWN FROM THIS SUBJECT.

1. *Do not doubt the Spirit's power.*

If the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, why then should you doubt his ability to accomplish all that he has promised? The mind of the Christian is frequently the prey of doubts; and perhaps that man who was to declare that he was free from doubts, would need to have the superstructure of his confidence pulled to pieces; for although doubts form no part of religion, yet they appear to be invariably mixed up with religion. Yet with such exceedingly precious promises, and with such an all-powerful Spirit, we should manage to get our minds quickly relieved.

2. *Do not doubt the Spirit's kindness.*

How often has the Spirit knocked at your hearts and been refused entrance? He has come in the morning, and has been

dismissed: in the evening, but the door was closed; and He has done this for years; and what has He thus visited you for, but that he might put you in possession of the richest blessings in the universe? And for what have you put him off? The beggarly elements of the world.

3. *Beware lest the Spirit forsake you.*

What is the lesson taught by the deluge? Why was the narrative recorded? Why are its effects still visible on our planet? That we might know that the Spirit will not always strive with man. Some of you are in danger of the Spirit taking his departure, and if he should withdraw, you are lost for ever.

B—T.

XL.

THE AWFUL CONDITION OF THE IMPENITENT.

NAHUM i. 6.—“Who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide the fierceness of his anger?”

The progress of every sinner is toward a point, *after* which his salvation is impossible. Up to a certain period in his history, there is hope for every sinner; after that period his damnation is inevitable. Every sinner who does not avail himself in the “now” of the means of salvation, will soon have reached a condition out of which it will be impossible to save him. Although this is a generally acknowledged truth, it is not so generally agreed upon when the case of the impenitent becomes hopeless. Some think that it is not till the close of life. Far be it from me to limit the mercy of God; if a hoary-headed sinner of a hundred years would return to God, he would be received graciously, and loved freely; but the question is not so much, *May* he return, as *will* he? Among the considerations which to me make it appear certain, that he who is finally lost has his doom sealed in the present life, is this, that God is so merciful that he will never damn a sinner while there is any chance of saving him. God gives to the sinner every kind of opportunity before he seals his final doom.

The scriptures assign two reasons as concurring to make the salvation of the sinner impossible after a certain point; one reason is taken from the condition of the sinner himself, “why should ye be stricken any more, ye will revolt more and more.” When the Gospel, accompanied by the agency of the Holy Spirit, is first brought to bear on the mind of the sinner, its influence is much greater than after it has been successively exhibited for a number of years. Every individual who hears the gospel in early life, is more easily moved and wrought upon than he is at an advanced period. Each individual in this congregation can

recall periods in which he was powerfully awakened by the truths of the gospel, although the same truths now produce no effect upon him. The process which has been going on in the mind, has been of a hardening character, and the same process will continue until you come to a point at which you will be unmoved under the most powerful strivings of the Holy Spirit. Now, is it at all likely that, having successfully resisted the Spirit while your hearts were comparatively tender, you will be brought to yield when they are hardened by a long course of sin and of resistance to the Spirit? No, up to a certain point there is hope for you, although that hope is lessening every day; but after that point there is no hope, for you never *will* turn; I do not say that you never *can*, but that you never *will*.

Another mode of accounting for the truth now under review is, that at a certain point God's character binds him to inflict condemnation. Thus we read of being given up to the heart's lust; of being left under "blindness;" of being reserved for the vengeance of eternal fire. Oh! let all the unconverted around me begin at once to seek for mercy; for if you do not, and should become one of the characters we have been describing, the most fearful judgments await you.

In order to impress our minds more deeply, let us attend,

I. TO THE THRILLING ENQUIRY OF THE TEXT.

"Who can stand before his indignation?"

Notice it,

1. *In its import.*

God, in order to impress our minds with his great and solemn purpose of punishing final impenitence, has employed the most terrific and fearful imagery. The terms employed usually denote those penal visitations which await those who have resisted the gospel. "Indignation" is inflamed wrath. The Scriptures frequently speak of God's wrath and indignation; but we are not to suppose, because such terms are employed, that there is any thing like human passion in God. All passion supposes a degree of imperfection. But this is the only way in which God can convey to our minds the knowledge of that attribute of his character, and that principle of his government, by which it is impossible for him to let sin go unpunished. God, in condescension to man, and in the absence of any thing more appropriate, represents these by reference to human passions and proceedings. Now, if there be nothing like human passion in God, the reality must be greatly more terrible than even these terms imply. For all imagery, however appropriate; all description, however graphic; all illustration, however well adapted; must fall short of the reality of that intended. For instance, in the text there is reference to the "anger" of God. This term, as applied to Him, does not describe the same state of mind as it would applied to us; yet it does describe a feature in God's character, an attribute

of his nature, or a principle of his government, which could not be so well described in any other way. There is this remarkable difference betwixt anger in man and this attribute of God: the anger of man is fluctuating, uncertain—not always excited by the same cause, more easily roused at one time than another; but this attribute of God is certain, always the same, without fluctuation, and in continual operation; it is unchangeable, like himself. If you ask, Why the sinner is suffered to go on so long with impunity? We answer, Because he has not arrived at that period of his history in which it will be felt; but let him once come within the range of its operation, and he will feel that “our God is a consuming fire!”

2. *Its period.*

The language of the text may imply that there is a fixed period when all the treasures of wrath will be poured out on the impenitent. Such language as this may have a special reference to the day of general doom. But at what period in the sinner's history does the sinner come under the influence of this indignation? We think that there is a sense in which it is applicable to the present life. When the sinner reaches the state of final impenitency, the sentence then passes the lips of the Eternal, though the execution of it may be delayed to a future time.

3. *Its severity and certainty.*

There are two things in the context from which these points are inferred.

(1.) *From the goodness of God.*

“The Lord is slow to anger.” “The Lord is good.” This is the description of God which obtains in the sacred volume, and it is this fact respecting God which makes his wrath the more fearful; for it is certain that it must be great provocation which could arouse it. It seems to be that which is contrary to his nature. It is unlike his usual proceedings. Look at his goodness, consider his mercy, think of his love; and how great, how fearful, how certain must be his anger. Thus, in the Revelations we have this idea presented to us under the aspect of “the wrath of the Lamb.”

(2.) *From the power of God.*

The verses surrounding the text abound with graphic description and sublime imagery, setting forth the power of God: “The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm.” “The mountains quake at him, the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence. Who can stand before his indignation?”

II. LET US ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE THIS SUBJECT.

“Who can stand before his indignation? Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?”

1. *Can the impenitent?*

You have had repeated invitations to accept his mercy. He has bent over you in the attitude of beseeching tenderness; he has

called you, warned you, beseeched you, implored you, wept over you, shed his blood for you, given his spirit to you—but all in vain; you have rejected his every entreaty, successfully stood out against every overture of mercy, despised the riches of his goodness, and treated with contemptuous indifference the manifestations of his love. *Can you stand* before his indignation? You have refused to avail yourself of offered mercy, you have neglected the great atonement; how will you stand before God without a Saviour? How can you encounter the wrath of the Lamb, whose sacrifice you have slighted, and whose love and mercy you have scorned?

2. *Can the formalist?*

He who, like Cain, has been content with offering a mere formal acknowledgment of the supremacy of the great God, without having regard to the provisions of the great scheme of mediation? He who has thought it sufficient to present the mere service of the lip, without the devotion of the heart?

3. *Can the backslider?*

Poor man! the remembrance of your former spiritual enjoyments will add to the wretchedness of your future condition. Some backsliders are sceptical as to the reality of their former experiences; but will it be so then? Oh no! the memory, now so treacherous, will faithfully portray all the past. Now you forget the past, because you have so much to do with the present; but then, as the undying worm, it will be continually employed in bringing the past visibly before you.

Oh, let me press on every one of you to seize the present moment as the moment given for your salvation! "Why will you die?" God has no pleasure in your death, he wills your salvation now; O come to him, and be saved!

XLI.

NATURE AND NECESSITY OF REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

HABAKKUK iii. 2.—"O Lord, revive thy work."

No subject is invested with so much interest to the Christian as that which relates to the success of Christ's cause in the world, and the mode of extending it. He who feels no interest in this theme, ought to question his right to the character of Bible Christian. The progress of Christ's kingdom amongst men, is the one purpose aimed at in the establishment and continuance of the Christian church, and in the appointment of the Christian ministry. "No man liveth to himself;" he who does so, he who does not spend his energies, employ his talents, and seize hold of

all opportunities to save souls, is in that condition which renders it imperative to seek his own salvation. Every one that is saved is anxious for the salvation of others, and he who has no such anxiety—an anxiety exhibited in corresponding exertion—is not himself saved; and if he think *that he is*, then the most charitable judgment that we can form of him is, that he is deceived.

The non-progress of the cause of Christ in any place, is owing, then, to the want of real Christianity amongst its professors. Hence the necessity of urging on the few who are saved, to join ardently in offering the prayer of the prophet, in the text, "O Lord, revive thy work."

Let us look at this prayer.

I. IN ITS MEANING.

Notice,

1. *The subject of the prayer.*

"Thy work."

The work to which the prophet refers, is that which is carried on in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit; especially those operations which precede and accompany the conversion of a sinner from the error of his way. That such a change as that intimated by the term conversion does take place under the preaching of the gospel, is matter of fact undisputed and undenied. The change itself is from a state of enmity to friendship, from a state in which the subject of it was under the curse, to a state in which he is the child of God. Conversion is the result of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit; it is not a change produced by second causes, by any system of means whatever. Some of the things which accompany it may have had their origin in other things; but the change itself is the personal work of the Holy Spirit. Show me a man who has been converted, and you show me one who has been in direct contact with the Spirit of God. No one can be converted without this direct operation of the Spirit—his influences are essential in every stage of the process. This work is going on more or less in every congregation. The Spirit is personally present wherever the gospel is preached. The evident tokens of that presence are observable in the emotions of alarm, fear, anxiety, desire, and others, which are excited in the breasts of various individuals on such occasions. Sometimes these emotions are attributed to other causes; but this we dare not do, lest we should be guilty of the fearful sin of attributing to another, that which is the effect of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Any such way of accounting for these things is, in our estimation, a near approach to the sin against the Holy Ghost.

2. *The thing requested.*

"Revive thy work."

The term "revival" is said by some to suppose a previous declension, and can therefore only be applied strictly to individuals who have once lived in the enjoyment of religion, but who have

declined therein. Yet it is generally used to describe those outpourings of the Holy Spirit in which large numbers of men are converted. Now, to us, this appears as correct an application of the term as the former; for the prophet prays, "Revive *thy* work." Not, revive the Christian church; not, revive a backsliding people; but, "Revive *thy* work." Now, if we look at the work of the Spirit in the commencement of Christianity, we find that masses of men were wrought upon by the Holy Spirit, and thousands simultaneously converted to God. Wherever the gospel was preached, the majority of its hearers appear to have been the subjects of the converting power of the Spirit. This appears to have been the ordinary success attendant on the preaching of the cross. *Now*, on the other hand, the conversion of one here, and another there, occasionally, is the ordinary success, and the conversion of a few hundreds now and then, is said to be the result of an *extraordinary* outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and this *we* dignify with the name of revival. This state of things ought to be abandoned. We ought to measure our success by the success of the early church. We ought to look on that success as indicating the character and extent of the Spirit's ordinary operations through all time; and when we offer up the prayer of the text, "O Lord, *revive thy work*," we ought to mean, "Let that degree of influence, and that extent of success, which attended the first promulgation of thy truth, attend the preaching of thy gospel here and every where." Let us do this, let us get into the habit of regarding every thing short of apostolical success as declension from the Spirit's ordinary work, and we shall soon be in a position to offer up the prayer with extended meaning and unlimited application; and we shall have that which is really worthy of the name of a revival. Never let us conceive that there is a revival while we fall short of the success of the early church. With whatever measure of success God may crown our efforts, let us never be satisfied till the majority of the unconverted in every congregation are, at the same moment, the subjects of the converting grace of the almighty and good Spirit. When we offer up this prayer, therefore, let us remember that we are praying that God will vouchsafe to us the same measure of success as existed in the days of the apostles. But while we limit our regards to the conversion of a few, while we look on isolated conversions as the ordinary work of the Spirit, and the occasional conversion of hundreds as extraordinary—or a revival—we shall never realize the success of early times. Oh! then, let us offer up the prayer of the prophet in the sense of, Restore unto us the Spirit to the extent in which his influences were enjoyed at Pentecost, and the few following years.

Let us look at this prayer,

II. IN ITS NECESSITY.

We are surrounded by myriads of immortal beings; a dense

throng of all ages and conditions are passing on with all the fleetness of time into eternity. Wherever we go we find a busy, active, restless, dissatisfied, unhappy multitude, going to the grave, under the sentence of death, exposed to the curse of God. Each individual of these masses has a soul whose value no arithmetic can calculate, the unnumbered wealth of the world not purchase. In a few years their destiny will be fixed for ever. Concerning this mass of immortals, observe,

1. *The majority of them are out of the reach of the ordinary means which God uses to convert sinners.*

They attend no place of worship, they listen to no ministry, they disregard the Bible, which they do not read, perhaps do not possess; thousands are sunk into profligacy and crime, alike ignorant and careless of their condition and destiny.

2. *Many of those who attend the preaching of the gospel are in a somewhat more perilous condition.*

Many have been so often the subjects of awakening and conviction, that now the truth takes no hold of them. Conversions are few and widely scattered; the truth is withstood; thousands listen to the gospel, unmoved by its threatenings, untouched by its mercy.

3. *The apathy of professing Christians on this subject is another remarkable fact.*

Though this is the undoubted state of the world; yet how very little is the amount of effort put forth by Christians so called, in their own several localities, to bring sinners to God!

This being the existing state of things; who is there that is not convinced of the urgent necessity of putting up the prayer of the text, with all earnestness and perseverance. "O Lord, revive thy work." Look at this prayer,

III. IN ITS INDICATIONS.

It indicates,

1. *The means to be employed to obtain this revival.*

The text recognises the Spirit's agency as essential to conversion. This is peculiarly his work; without him it cannot be accomplished. How, then, is he to be induced to revive his work? Prayer is the great means indicated in the text. The text itself is a prayer; a prayer indicative of much feeling in the breast of the prophet.

Before this prayer can be offered in any thing like fervency or sincerity, we must get a proper sense of the state and value of souls. We must endeavour to realize the importance of the Spirit's influences, in connexion with their salvation.

Prayer, to be successful, ought to be earnest and importunate. This will not be so unless there is deep feeling. It is a principle in the bestowment of spiritual blessings, to have reference to the strength of the desire and to the urgency of the prayer for them;

how much more so when the blessing sought is copious effusions of the Holy Spirit!

Prayer, to be successful, requires that we bring particular cases of individuals and congregations before God; much prayer is lost because it is so general. Prayer must be persevering; we ought to unite in prayer, and continue to pray until the blessing sought is obtained, until thousands on every hand are converted to God; and then prayer is to be offered for larger outpourings of the Spirit. One error which now prevails amongst us is ceasing to pray after realizing a little success; but this, instead of satisfying us, ought to incite to more fervent petitions, for more extensive outpourings of the Spirit.

It has,

2. *Indications of encouragement.*

(1.) *Such outpourings of the Spirit are the subject of ancient prophecy.* Isaiah xli. 6. lxi. 11. xlv. 3—5. lv. 10, 11. Psalm lxxii. 6—16. Joel ii. 28—32.

(2.) *The great design of the gospel can be effected by this alone.*

The object of the gospel is to bring the world to God. Wherever it is preached it aims at the conversion of large numbers to God. But how is this to be had, but by rapid and simultaneous conversions? Only consider what numbers die daily. What a many changes take place in every congregation in the space of one year. Let us remember that twenty millions die yearly, and that the work of conversion does not proceed at one-twentieth of that rate. How long will it be ere the world is converted to God at the present rate of progression? Will it ever be? Does not the population of the earth increase in greater ratio than its conversions? Yet the design of the gospel is the salvation of the world. How can that design be effected without revivals equal in extent and efficiency to apostolic times? Here, then, is encouragement to pray.

(3.) *Another source of encouragement to pray for an outpouring of the Spirit may be found in the effects which would flow from it.*

Were such an outpouring to be vouchsafed to any particular congregations, neither its effects nor its blessings would be confined to such congregations. Distant places would hear the tidings, and would catch the flame; others would be spurred to the use of the same means, and would be awakened to anxiety for the same success. Go, then, to work this very hour; at once lift up your heart to God in determined prayer; be determined that you will not be without a revival. Go, in the strength of the Mighty One of Jacob, in the pursuit of lost souls: gird up the loins of your mind, and in ardent but sober zeal, lay yourselves out for the accomplishment of the great end of your existence, the bringing lost sinners to God.

G.

XLII.

THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT.

ZECH. xii. 10.—“ I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace, and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.”

Amidst much that is discouraging in the present aspect of things, in the Christian church, there is one feature which cannot fail to yield to the lover of Zion's prosperity, unmingled satisfaction; it is the attention which is being excited and bestowed, respecting the work of the Holy Spirit, as it stands connected with the ushering in the latter-day glory. There was a time when even to hint that the promise of the Spirit might be conditional, would have raised round the bold innovator in received opinions, a host of objectors, who apparently alarmed lest the devil should get *too few*, and Christ *too many*, souls, would talk largely about interfering with the Divine sovereignty; but now, this subject forms one of almost general interest and enquiry. For a length of time the opinion has obtained, that there is some period in the future, when God will grant such effusions of his Spirit, that the world will be thereby speedily converted. That as there was a “fulness of time,” in which Christ was “sent forth,” so there is a fulness of time, a determined period, which can neither be hastened nor retarded, when the Holy Spirit in his fulness of power, will be poured out on the church and the world. Without adverting to the disastrous influence of this opinion, we think it the sign of a better day, that an enquiry into its truth is being set on foot in almost every section of the church. If we turn to the Establishment of this country, we find there a party sprung up within the past few years, and rapidly increasing, who are engaged studying those prophecies which have relation to the triumphs of the gospel in the latter days. And though, in our estimation, they have in some measure erred and strayed from the fold of correct scriptural interpretation, yet we cannot but look upon it as a step in the right direction.

Many of the leading men amongst the great body of Independents have also of late turned their attention to the connexion between the work of the Spirit, and the efforts of the church, in procuring and forwarding revivals of religion. Many valuable treatises on this and kindred subjects, which have emanated from this denomination latterly, indicate that the state of feeling, on this matter, is advancing to a healthy state. The assembly of the Free Church has also strongly recommended its ministers to make the work of the Spirit the object of study, and the theme

of pulpit address. These circumstances, we think, ought to encourage us to labour, and to expect that the time is not far distant when the church, *taught her duty*, will rise up and wrestle for the fulfilment of promises, and the completion of redemption in a universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In our text we have,

I. A GRACIOUS PROMISE.

"I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace."

1. *Its import.* "Spirit of grace."

Some have attempted to show that there is no reference here to the Holy Spirit, but only to those gracious effects which the gospel would produce on the character and conduct of the child of God. To us, however, it appears to have especial reference to the Holy Spirit, not only because this is one of the titles by which he is described in the New Testament (Heb. x. 29), but because those operations, which are invariably attributed to the Holy Spirit, are here ascribed to the "Spirit of grace." The offices of the Holy Spirit are various. He it is who communicates the knowledge of adoption, who regenerates the nature, who sanctifies the soul. But to none of these operations does the text refer. The term "grace" sometimes signifies the unmerited mercy in which the scheme of redemption had its origin, Ephes. ii. 8. At other times it signifies the strength which is afforded to the Christian in seasons of trial, 1 Cor. xii. 9. But at other times it refers to the awakening and conviction which precede conversion. Such is its import here. The term "Spirit of grace" describes that mighty influence which arrests the sinner in his progress to destruction, and which brings him as a lost, guilty, hell-deserving sinner, to the cross for mercy.

2. *Its origin.* "I will."

He who promises the Spirit is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a beautiful harmony betwixt this and other predictions of the Old Testament, and the statements of the New, on this subject. In the last conversation that took place between our Saviour and his disciples before his death, that conversation which commenced in the upper room, where he had celebrated the last passover and instituted the "Lord's supper," and which continued through the streets of Jerusalem and the lanes of its environs to Gethsemane, in that conversation he said to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart *I will send him unto you.*" And again, in the parting at Bethany, at his ascension, he said, "Behold, *I send the promise of my Father upon you.*" And on the day of Pentecost, Peter, in his sermon, observes, "Jesus . . . being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Passages teaching, or

implying, the same truth, might easily be multiplied. The importance of this view of the question cannot be too rightly estimated. If the Spirit be given to Christ, if he be placed by the Father at his disposal, who can doubt his willingness to send him forth into the world, especially when it is remembered that the success of his own cause is intimately and essentially connected with the work of that Spirit?

3. *Its plenitude.* "I will pour."

The figure employed here is frequently used by the prophets to describe the copiousness and frequency in which the Spirit is to be poured out in the days of the Messiah. Isaiah xlv. 3—5. Ezek. xxxiv. 26. Joel ii. 28.

There are few aspects of this subject so encouraging as the one now under consideration. How frequently are we inclined to cease praying for the Spirit, knowing that the individuals in whose behalf we pray have again and again been visited with those very influences which form the subject of our prayers. They have been visited without effect when their hearts were comparatively tender; how unlikely that they will yield when they are in some measure habituated to his influences. And how little likely does it appear to mere reason, that Christ will continue to send the Spirit, when *he* has been so often resisted. Now, the topic under consideration looks at both these points. For as, on the one hand, there is need of more powerful influence, which the Spirit exerts, there is, on the other, encouragement to expect that he will not be withheld although hitherto he may have been resisted. Where is the individual who is not indebted to this part of the promise? Who is it that was ever converted under the first strivings of the Spirit? Have we not all had influence which we have resisted; and has not the Spirit again and again adapted his operations to our altering circumstances? That which is true in our experience will be found to be so in that of others. And although we may not find any who have not been the subjects of awakening energy oftentimes repeated, yet the promise is to the effect that the Holy Spirit shall be "poured out," till the wilderness become a fruitful field.

4. *Its extent.* "On the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

"The house of David," the royal family, those occupying high stations in society, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem," the lowest of the people. This phraseology includes all classes and conditions of men. Perhaps, from the allusion in the latter part of the text, the truth intended may be, that this Spirit will be poured on the guiltiest of the world's population. For who so guilty as they who imbrued their hands in the blood of "him that was pierced."

5. *Its certainty.* "I will."

That this Spirit will be poured out so long as there remain a

people unblest with the gospel, or a sinner unsaved, may be inferred,

(1.) *From the word of Christ.*

The language of the text is spoken by one who cannot change. Having promised he must perform. He is without a "shadow of a turning."

(2.) *From its connexion with the results of his death.*

Christ, in his atonement, and the Spirit, in his operations, have but one design in view. If these are withheld, that is vain. The objects of the atonement cannot be accomplished without the work of the Spirit; hence we infer that the promise is certain of continual fulfilment.

(3.) *The covenant engagement of the Father with the Son.*

"Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." "To him every knee shall bow." These passages, and a hundred others, depend for their realization on the fulfilment of the promise in the text.

6. *Under what circumstances may the Spirit be expected?*

There is a sense in which the promise has been fulfilled. The Spirit is now in the world. In the same sense in which the Son was in the world in the days of his flesh. He is personally, peculiarly present; every conversion is evidence of the fulfilment of the promise, and of the Spirit's personal presence. But allowing that there is the actual presence of the Spirit in our world, yet there is no question that the same amount of energy is not put forth in our congregations which the language of the text warrants us to expect, and which was actually realized in the early ages of the church. Why is this? One reason may be that we have not the *same strong anxious desire* for it. Another, that we do not offer up such *earnest, united, and persevering* prayer.

(1.) *Our prayers ought to be earnest.*

There is a remarkable prophecy in the last chapter of Isaiah, which describes the kind of prayer and the extent of feeling for souls, which will precede the conversion of the world. We are there told that "when Zion travailed, she brought forth." Christ is said to have *travailed* when, in the depth of his agony, he "sweat as it were great drops of blood." Now when our feelings approach in character to his, then may we expect "nations to be born at once, and the earth to bring forth in a day." From this passage we might infer that the church has it in her power at once to cause the latter-day glory to dawn. But if so then individual Christians, by getting into this *travailing* Spirit, might obtain in their congregations the same plenitude and extent of influence which the apostles enjoyed.

(2.) *Our prayers ought to be united and persevering.*

How distinctly did the Saviour promise the Spirit to his disciples, and how emphatically did he charge them to stay in Jerusalem till they received him. Yet the Spirit was not given

on either the first or second time that they met together; why? because they were not yet in the right state of mind to receive it. That they were not yet in a *condition* to receive it, is evident from their casting lots for an apostle; but did their choice stand? No, God himself set it aside by placing Paul in the apostleship. On the third time of meeting they received the promise, and here is the reason, "they were all with one accord in one place," waiting for the promise of the Father.

(3.) *We ought to expect the Spirit to convert in all our services.*

If a right state of feeling existed amongst us, we should retire from the sanctuary disappointed, grieved, and astonished, if sinners were not converted. But this appears to be the farthest from our thoughts: nay if sinners were now to cry out for mercy on every hand would it not astonish us, instead of being the matter of course. Why do we thus meet together? Is it not that sinners may be converted?

II. THE BLESSED RESULTS.

"They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him."

The result aimed at and effected by the Spirit is the production of godly sorrow for sin, and its concomitant blessings. This sorrow is exhibited,

1. In its nature.

It is not so much sorrow for sin, as intense bitterness of soul that sin caused the Saviour so much suffering. It is mourning for *him*, mourning that his mercy has been so long refused, his love so long alighted, his Spirit so often resisted.

The way in which this sorrow is produced is worthy of remark; it is not by bringing sin in its magnitude, and guilt before the mind; it is not by rolling the thunders of the law over the soul of the sinner: it is done by the Spirit bringing the sinner to gaze on Christ as pierced by him. The Spirit always works in connexion with Christ.

It is a remark of Pliny, that the diamond is so hard that no force can bruise it, but steep it in the reeking blood of a goat in the death struggle, and you may easily grind it to powder. So with the human heart; take it and let the thunder of Sinai roll over it, and it remains a stone; let the lightning scathe it, it is a stone still; but bring it within sight of Calvary; let it come within the influence of the cross; let it be steeped in the blood of Christ, and it is softened at once into the reality of godly sorrow. Do you want this sorrow? Fix then your gaze on the cross; give up trying to count your sins; the effort to tell them is vain; look at the cross, see your sins there; look at Christ dying under the burden, and you will not, cannot look in vain.

2. Its characteristics.

Intensity is one characteristic of godly sorrow. The mode of illustration adopted in the text, is frequently employed by the prophets to describe great sorrow. Jer. vi. 26. Amos viii. 10.

The true penitent seeks solitude. Here it is distinguished from worldly sorrow. This leads those under its influence into company, that leads them alone. See the cases of Peter and Paul.

The spirit of supplication is another characteristic of true sorrow. As this sorrow partly consists of grief for refusing the mercy of Christ, it will, if genuine, sooner or later lead to Christ.

As these, then, are the results which will attend the outpouring of the Spirit, let us be encouraged at once to adopt the means which are necessary to obtain it.

G.

XLIII.

THE NAME OF GOD, AND THE GREATNESS THAT AWAITS IT.

MAL. i. 11.—“From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.”

One of the methods adopted by Infinite Wisdom, to prepare the world for the advent of the Messiah, was to make the provisions of the gospel the subject of prophetic description. During a succession of ages, that Being who sees the end from the beginning, caused the volume of prophecy to be unrolled, and portions of that great purpose to be unfolded, which has for its object, the winning of the world to God. Our text contains a prophetic declaration of the fact, that God shall be magnified, and honoured, and worshipped, by all nations. This will be done,

I. BY THE REVELATION OF HIS NAME.

“My name shall be great among the Gentiles.”

God cannot be worshipped unless he is known. He can only be known as he is pleased to reveal himself. We have a revelation of himself, in his word; there we are told that his name denotes himself, his nature, character, and all that can be known of him by man.

1. *It denotes his self-existence.*

Moses, solicitous to know the name of God, directly proposed the question, when the symbol of the Almighty appeared in the bush, “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM.” This name denotes existence; all other existence emanates from him. There was a period in which he only existed. Creation sprang at his bidding. Go through all the forms of existence; rise through every form of ascending nature, till you come to the highest platform of created superiority; you are then only at the first step of the throne of him who dwelleth in light inaccessible.

2. *The spirituality of his nature.*

The Being who filleth immensity must be spiritual. Our Saviour has placed this doctrine at the foundation of all pure and proper worship: "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

3. *It denotes plurality in the unity of the Godhead.*

The unity of the Godhead is a fundamental doctrine of revelation; but though he is One, he is ELOHIM—persons. This doctrine meets us on every page of revelation. A large portion of Scripture would be unintelligible without it. Genesis i. 26. Numbers vi. 23—27.

4. *It denotes the harmony of his attributes.*

God proclaimed his name to Moses as "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."

This name of God derives its chief lustre from the cross. It is there we see God as a just God and Saviour—there, amidst blackness and darkness, and earthquakes and blood, we see the harmony of all the attributes in the name of God.

II. IN THE MAJESTY OF HIS GOVERNMENT.

"My name shall be great among the Gentiles."

That this name shall be magnified, is the uniform doctrine of the scriptures. The majesty of his government is set forth,

1. *In its nature.*

Christ's government is eminently spiritual. It is opposed to idolatry. Idolatry is sin deified; Satan arrayed in the attributes of imaginary deity. It is opposed to infidelity, whether moving in the lurid glare of a corrupt and perverted genius, or tracking its serpent path by its slime, and entering into the habitation of the poor, turning into poison what would be their comfort. It is opposed to a mere formal or ceremonial worship. It is opposed to every thing earthly, sensual, or devilish. "In every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering."

2. *In its design.*

The kingdom of Christ is within you. It aims at bringing each thought, motive, and desire into subjection to Christ. It controls the mind, it sways the conscience, it rules the will, it influences the heart.

3. *In its silent but irresistible agency.*

In this government there is an influence which kings cannot see, which statesmen cannot take into their calculations, which philosophers know nothing about; yet is it an influence that is performing wonders. Christ is subordinating to himself all the talent, all the energy, all the adventurous curiosity of kings, and statesmen, and philosophers. Christ has gone forth for the salvation of the world. But his influence is secret. It is still true that he is alone in the mighty undertaking. All means are valueless

without him; he is the secret powerful energy which produces every change, and is yet destined to subdue all things to himself.

4. *In its results.*

It is glorious to think of the times when the name of the incarnate Redeemer "shall be great." "When he shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." When "to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord." When the song of triumph shall be raised in heavenly places, "the kingdoms of the earth are become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

III. IN THE CELEBRATION OF HIS WORSHIP.

This worship will be universal.

It will be "offered in every place." Myriads of spirits everywhere shall be ascending in flames of pure devotion to God. Then the glorious description of the prophet will be realized, "Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give her light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous."

L.

XLIV.

NEUTRALITY IN THE CAUSE OF CHRIST IMPOSSIBLE.

MATTHEW xii. 30.—"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

It is impossible to mistake the doctrine of the text; it is that there is not, there cannot be, any neutrality in religion. Every man is either *for* or *against* Christ. Such is the proposition of the text, a proposition which militates against the idea that if we are not decided for Christ we are not decided against him. If we are not decided for Christ we are decided *against* him.

I. THEY WHO ARE NOT WITH CHRIST AS DISCIPLES, ARE AGAINST HIM AS DISCIPLES OF ANOTHER.

Christ claims entire authority over the conscience and heart of every man. He claims this in the character of sovereign. As Creator he has undoubted right to the services of his creatures. He claims this in the character of Redeemer. Every man is placed under obligation to believe in Christ, and he who does not, he who

is not *with* Christ in the exercise of faith, is *against* him in the exercise of disobedience and unbelief.

THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH CHRIST IN THE DESIGN OF HIS DEATH, ARE AGAINST HIM IN DEFEATING THE DESIGN OF HIS DEATH.

1. *One purpose of the death of Christ was to make an atonement for sin.*

In the meritorious part of our redemption, Christ was alone; none were, none could be, with him. "He trod the winepress alone;" no obedience, no sufferings, can add to the merit of his cross; we cannot merit salvation for ourselves, neither can we co-operate in procuring salvation for others. In this sense we cannot be *with* Christ.

2. *Another purpose of the death of Christ was to give repentance and pardon to guilty men.*

Though we cannot be *with* Christ in providing salvation, we may be *with* him in enjoying salvation. Repentance and remission of sins are offered in his name; he is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give them. He suffered that these blessings might be offered to the acceptance of men; and he who is not in possession of them is *against* Christ, he treats the Saviour with contempt and scorn.

3. *Another purpose of the death of Christ was to make meet for the glory of heaven.*

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might prepare for himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. They who are his people, are begotten again unto a lively hope, "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." "He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure." Such being the design of his death, he who does not seek the meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, is *against* Christ in the design of his death.

III. THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH CHRIST IN THE AFFECTIONS OF THE HEART, ARE AGAINST HIM IN ITS ENMITIES AND IN ITS INDIFFERENCE.

The affection of the heart is an essential part of true religion. Love to Christ is essential to Christianity. There can be no religion without it. Men may differ about many things, but they are not Christians if they do not love the Saviour. Men who do not love Christ are against him. They are against him either by positive enmity, or by indifference. There are some hearts where the very name of Christ rouses up every bad passion; these are unquestionably against him. But there are others equally against him, who only show it by cold indifference. Coldness of heart to Christ is impiety.

IV. THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH CHRIST IN GATHERING, ARE AGAINST HIM IN SCATTERING ABROAD.

We all exert an influence on those around us; that influence is every moment either for good or evil. It is either employed for Christ or *against* him. Neutrality here is opposition. If we do

not employ our talents, property, rank, influence, to promote the cause of Christ, we employ them against him. Our example operates powerfully on those around us.

D.

XLV.

POWER AND EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

MATTHEW XV. 28.—“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

The narratives of scripture are full of instruction; the lessons they inculcate cannot be too highly valued; the principles they illustrate are of the utmost importance. The narrative with which our text stands connected is of great value as setting forth the importance of perseverance and faith in prayer. We shall endeavour to illustrate the subject of prayer in a few particulars, from the narrative before us.

Notice,

I. PRAYER IN ITS OPPORTUNITIES.

Some are more highly favoured with opportunities of prayer than others. Many are early instructed in its nature, and are taught to make known their wants, and to address their supplications to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, from their earliest infancy; others are destitute of such instruction: such was the case probably with the Canaanitish woman, who so urgently presented her suit to our Lord.

Seasons of affliction furnish opportunities for prayer. It was domestic affliction which brought this woman to the Saviour. Prayer is always obligatory, but this is not always felt or acknowledged. But when affliction comes, and business ceases to occupy the mind, and the cares of this life for a while cease, and man is almost compelled to think, then there is the opportunity—precious, yea invaluable—for prayer.

The special presence of Christ either at times of public worship, or in the influence of his Spirit in private, furnish opportunity for prayer. It was the presence of the Saviour in the immediate neighbourhood of the Canaanitish woman, that induced her to come to him. In like manner every appointed season ought to be seized upon, and prayer urged at the throne of grace.

II. PRAYER IN ITS OBJECTS.

1. *It ought to be personal.*

“Lord help me,” is the language of true prayer. All are needy, all are guilty, all are in danger; all have access to the throne of grace, all are invited to come; therefore prayer ought to be personal.

2. *It ought to be intercessory.*

The woman in our text was urgent, but it was for another, she made the case of her daughter her own; she felt that Christ, in showing mercy to her daughter, was showing mercy to her.

We are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves; but if we love our neighbour as ourselves, then we must feel for them as for ourselves, and pray for them as for ourselves. Who is my neighbour? Christ has taught us that all who need our help are our neighbours, whether they be inhabitants of Cafferland, or of England. For all destitute of the saving grace of the gospel we ought to offer up intercessory prayer.

III. PRAYER IN ITS DISCOURAGEMENTS.

For a time and there may appear to be no ear for your prayers. So it was with the Canaanitish woman; she cried "but he answered her not a word." Others may also plead on your behalf, and still apparently without success. The disciples besought the master in her behalf, but the application appeared fruitless. Indications contrary to the petition may appear in the course of providential dealing; thus the woman was met by a rebuff—"It is not meet to cast the children's bread unto dogs." These and other sources of discouragement may exist—but persevere.

IV. PRAYER IN ITS SUCCESS.

Prayer, to be successful,

1. *Must be persevering.*

The woman persevered in her request notwithstanding all her discouragements and trials; she did not give up when he took no notice of her; she did not cease when the disciples were disregarded: she urged her suit with greater vehemency; and when she was met with what appeared the language of contempt, she then throws her whole soul into her prayer, and reasons with Christ why *her* request should be complied with.

Prayer, to be successful,

2. *Must be offered in faith.*

"O woman, great is thy faith."

It was to faith that the Lord had respect in granting her petition. Nothing else was so valuable in his account. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Without it, prayer—however earnest, however importunate, however persevering—is of no avail.

N.

XLVI.

THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxii. 42.—"What think ye of Christ?"

This was a very appropriate question under the circumstances described in the preceding verses. At the time of our Lord's

appearing there was a general expectation of the Messiah, yet when he came, they doubted his mission, disbelieved his statements, rejected his miracles, and finally crucified him. The reason why they so acted was, that they had formed false views of his character.

Let us notice,

I. CHRIST'S CLAIMS TO OUR ATTENTION.

1. *He is the principal subject of the scriptures.*

This book contains the most ancient and the most authentic history in the world, it abounds with instructive biography, it is full of beautiful poetry, and it has sublime though mysterious prophecy; but it derives its chief value from its being a revelation from God. This revelation discloses the origin of evil, and informs us of the reason of its continuance. It develops a scheme of mercy; it throws a brilliant light over man's future prospects. In a word, with the contents of this book, man's everlasting welfare is intimately connected. Such a book as this is, has peculiar claims to our attention; and the attention it claims for itself, it also demands for its principal subject. *The Bible is the history of Jesus Christ.* He forms its subject from the beginning to the end. From its pages we learn that by him the world was made, and that for him it is preserved. The government of it has ever been laid upon his shoulder. The Old Testament develops the principles of his government, and prepares the way for his advent; the New Testament contains the narrative of his advent, and the consequences involved in it.

2. *Because of his earthly history.*

Angels announced his birth—a new world was created to guide, as the star of the morning, the wise men of the east to the manger of Bethlehem. Every step of his progress through life was marked with miracles wrought by his own power. He went about doing good, yet he was the object of bitter hatred, and of relentless persecution. The closing scenes of his life were equally remarkable—there was the mysterious agony in the garden—the conflict with invisible powers on the cross—the supernatural eclipse—the earthquake—the vail of the temple rent—the resurrection of the saints—his own resurrection. Such a series of remarkable circumstances in his earthly career presents strong claims on our attention.

3. *The mysterious union in his person of the Divine and human nature.*

This is a mystery which angels desire to look into. It is a subject on which we must not speculate; for all our knowledge of it we must depend entirely on what God has been pleased to reveal in his word. From its statements we learn that in that period of the past in which no created being had an existence—he was. "Before Abraham was *I am*." This universe had a beginning, but he had none. It was his voice, sounding through

the existing solitude, which called matter into being; he it was who gave it laws and set its boundaries. The worlds of matter and of mind call him their Creator and their God. Col. i. Ascend at this moment to the highest point in the universe, extend your flight to its furthest outskirts, go where you will, visit where you may, you cannot find a place where he is not;—he is God. Yet, he is also man. “As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” He was truly man, exposed to the same afflictions, subject to the same infirmities, accessible to the same fatigue. He had human appetites and passions, he hungered—he thirsted—he wept—he slept—he suffered—he bled—he died. He was truly God, and truly man; yet but one person. O mysterious union! What high destinies were at stake to require such a union as this!

4. *He is the appointed Mediator between God and man.*

The office of a mediator is to reconcile opposed parties. Christ came to reconcile God and man. Man had broken the law of God, and it was necessary that the penalty should be executed; hence man lay under the sentence of everlasting death. Besides this, man is inherently corrupt; his nature and habits totally unfit him for approaching to God. Under these circumstances Christ died for him; made thereby an atonement for his sin; removed the obstacles to his forgiveness; made it right and just for God to forgive sin, and opened the way for the Holy Spirit to change his nature and transform his habits. Thus through Christ, as Mediator, we have access to God. There is no other way. “I am the way.” “No man cometh to the Father but by me.” No where can God, the offended sovereign, meet the sinner, but in Christ. Through Christ, as the Mediator, pardon is procured. Pardon can only be granted in consideration of an atonement. “He, by the sacrifice of himself, put away sin.”

II. THE INTIMATE CONNEXION BETWIXT RIGHT VIEWS OF THE SAVIOUR, AND OUR OWN PRACTICE.

According to the views we form of the character of Christ will be our,

1. *Anxiety for salvation.*

In the death of Christ we have God's estimate of the value of the human soul. The constitution of the Saviour's person, and the character of his death, show the soul to be of infinite value. The danger of man must have been imminent indeed, and the misery with which he was threatened of the severest kind, as it was necessary, ere his salvation could be effected, for God to become man, and to endure unparalleled suffering. We cannot contemplate the character and work of the Saviour without at once assenting to the truth of this remark. How then is the general indifference to this subject, and the utter ungodliness which prevails, to be accounted for? The fact cannot for a moment be

questioned, that men, even those who are favoured with a gospel heart-searching ministry, are in general living in a state of entire carelessness of their everlasting interests. O let us cast our eye over the mass of beings who surround us, and we shall find that the majority are indifferent about the future. Do they sit under a faithful ministry? There is no effect produced on their lives. Do they listen to the denunciations of the Bible? they are not alarmed. It is not the same with them on other subjects; let life, or health, or property, be in jeopardy, and they are at once aroused; let information be given them that their temporal affairs are in great danger, and they will be instantly active and industrious. Why then this apathy in the most important of all subjects? They do not believe the statements. They have formed erroneous notions of the death of Christ; perhaps they look upon that merely as a representation of the mercy of God, forgetful that it is also an exhibition of the severest justice, and that it speaks out plainly, *God will punish sin.*

According to our views of the character of Christ will be our,
2. *Faith in him.*

Faith in Christ supposes a right conception of our own character, of our desert of punishment, of our momentary exposure to the wrath of God—and how can this be so well produced in our minds, as by an accurate conception of the character of the death of Christ? Faith is simple reliance upon the death of Christ as our atonement—but if we have low and erroneous views of his death, how can we exercise faith in him? With right views of his character our faith will be vigorous; our faith will increase and strengthen the more we know of Christ. There is no position in which the Christian can be placed in which he cannot, if he have right views of Christ, exercise faith in him. There is no danger so great, but Christ can rescue from it; no opposition so powerful but he can overcome; no temptation so strong, but he can deliver: no want so great, but he can supply.

And then, again, if the penitent sinner have right views of the character of Christ, how easy for him to believe. It is only when the penitent is ignorant of the Saviour that he flies first to one and then to another refuge of lies, from which he has to be driven, in order that he may be shut up unto faith in Christ.

According to our views of Christ will be our,

3. *Love to him.*

The gift of Christ is represented as the greatest manifestation of the love of God ever made; and it is urged as the reason why we should love God. Every intellectual creature of God is under obligation to love him; but he has placed us under peculiar obligation—he calls on us for a special love, and if we feel rightly concerning Christ, we shall love him; but if not, if our views are low and unworthy, our affections will be in accordance with them.

In conclusion, if you are carelessly indifferent about Christ, how hopeless are your prospects. You are under a curse, which no other *can* remove. How aggravated your guilt—how increased will be your condemnation.

G.

XLVII.

F A I T H.

MARK v. 36.—“Only believe.”

Much is said, in the word of God, of the principle of faith. The place that it occupies in the scheme of redemption is a very important one. It is essential to salvation. Without it we must remain destitute of all its blessings. This will be evident if we apply it,

I. TO THE GENERAL DOCTRINE OF SALVATION.

To every enquirer for salvation we say, “only believe.”

“Believe, and all your sin’s forgiven,
Only believe, and your’s is heaven.”

Not that faith is the originating cause of salvation—for that were to deny the free grace of God; nor that faith is the procuring cause of salvation—for that were to set aside the efficacy of Christ’s atonement; nor that faith is the efficient cause of salvation—for that were to set aside the agency of the Holy Spirit; but we say, that faith is the instrumental cause of salvation; that, without the exercise of which, no individual can experience salvation.

This is the doctrine of the gospel. Acts xvi. 31. xiii. 39. Ephesians ii. 8. Romans iii. 20—28. v. 1.

1. *This method of salvation conveys most glory to God.*

Any other mode of procuring acceptance with God, could another be substituted, would be derogatory to the character of God. Could man present a perfect and acceptable righteousness, salvation would not be needed; and if God were to accept an imperfect righteousness, and on that ground justify the ungodly, he would no longer be the “just God and Saviour.”

2. *This method of salvation alone produces real obedience.*

There is no obedience before faith. It is the operation of faith alone which can prepare us for any acts of obedience. Faith is difficult for this reason, that there is nothing so easy—the difficulty of faith is in its simplicity.

3. *This method is in accordance with the other parts of redemption.*

The idea of salvation by works is absurd—if your works are

good and perfect, what are you to be saved from? Faith simply receives Christ, and through him all the blessings of his atonement. Christ is a gift. The Holy Spirit is a gift. Eternal life is a gift. What so appropriate as faith—that which simply receives?

Let us apply the principle before us,

II. TO THE CASE OF THE TRUE PENITENT.

Unlike the generality of your fellow-sinners, you *feel* that you are a guilty sinner. The cry of your heart is, "What must I do to be saved?" We answer, "Only believe." This is the direction that was given, in circumstances like yours to the Philippian jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." To this faith in Christ we would have you "shut up." We would have you feel that there is no other way of escape from the danger which threatens you. Look up at once to Christ; look now! and, *believing*, you will "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Let us apply this principle,

III. TO CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS.

You are in the possession of the grace of justification, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." In you has been implanted the principle of spiritual life; you are "born from above." Still you are in search of a fuller blessedness; you believe that the *state* of entire sanctification is attainable by you all. How are you to attain it? To you we answer, "only believe." Our spiritual life is a life of faith in the Son of God, and if we want an increase of that we must get an increase of this. We must come for the blessing of perfect love, as we did for the blessing of pardon, in the exercise of simple faith.

Apply this principle,

IV. TO THE TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

It is applicable,

1. *To seasons of temptation.*

We are urged, above all, to take the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the devil. Our deliverance from the wiles of the adversary must be effected for us by the Captain of our salvation. It is necessary that we should be equipt with the whole armour of God; but after all we must depend simply on the power and promised assistance of Him who is "mighty to save."

It is applicable,

2. *To seasons of afflictive providences.*

You are tried in your circumstances; your plans are defeated; your labour is unavailing; your credit is ruined; you have no apparent prospect of retrieving your circumstances; every thing appears against you; all around appears gloomy and dark. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob," "only believe." He in whose

hands your life is, is but trying your confidence in him. In such seasons, faith only can yield you efficient support. We might apply this principle also to seasons of personal affliction, or of family bereavement, or of national calamity, or of want of success in the Saviour's cause. It may be applied to every circumstance and to every trial of the Christian life.

W. M. B.

XLVIII.

UNBELIEF.

MARK vi. 6.—“And he marvelled because of their unbelief.”

Unbelief is injurious to those who are under its influence; it deprives them of blessings, the possession of which depends on the exercise of faith; of blessings, without which the present life is without hope, and the future full of misery. In this view, unbelief is exceedingly unreasonable and absurd. On what principle can it be vindicated? It is alike contrary to man's duty and to his interest.

I. LET US EXPLAIN WHAT WE MEAN BY UNBELIEF.

Unbelief, in general, is the rejection of God's revealed truth; and in particular it implies the refusal and neglect to receive and act on the testimony God has given to his Son, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of guilty men.

1. *They who reject Christianity are under its influence.*

The unbelief of such persons is total. This applies to the Jews, to the Mahommedans, and also to thousands who live in a Christian country, but who refuse to give credence to the gospel's claims.

They are under its influence,

2. *Who mutilate and corrupt Christianity.*

There are many who profess to admire it, who are the very foremost to rob it of its peculiar excellency. Amongst these are they who deny the divinity and reject the atonement of Christ. They also who substitute lifeless forms for spiritual worship; sacramental efficacy for the Spirit's agency; or mediators many, for the one Mediator, must be all concluded under unbelief.

3. *Neglecters of the gospel are under the influence of unbelief.*

These hold the truth in unrighteousness. Their faith, such as it is, has no practical influence on their lives. True faith works by love, leads men to the Saviour, purifies the heart. How awfully prevalent is unbelief!

4. *They who are partly renewed, but not yet made perfect in love, are under the influence of unbelief in part.*

The penitent sinner who has not yet obtained pardon, is evi-

dently the subject of its power. The believer who rests short of his privileges, is so to some extent.

II. UNBELIEF IS ALTOGETHER UNREASONABLE AND UNBECOMING.

"He marvelled because of their unbelief."

1. *How unreasonable was the unbelief which our Lord witnessed in the days of his flesh.*

Consider their opportunities of seeing our Lord's character, and of listening to his doctrines; consider also their frequent confession of his wisdom and power. Advert, again, to the nature of their excuses, and to the fact of their possessing the ancient scriptures; and is it to be wondered at that our Lord marvelled because of their unbelief?

2. *Equally unreasonable is unbelief now.*

• (1.) *On what do modern infidels rest their unbelief?*

Do they plead want of evidence? Let them study our Christianity, the harmony of its various parts, its long chain of prophecies, its well attested miracles, its pure doctrines, its early progress, and its uniform influence on all kinds of character. Do they allege its mysteries as an argument against its truth? This is an additional argument in its favour. A revelation from God must have mysteries. There are mysteries all around us.

(2.) *Is not a disbelief of the principal doctrines of the gospel unreasonable?*

Of what value is a revelation to us sinners, without an atonement? What will the knowledge of God do for us without a Mediator? What good shall we derive from the Book of God if it disclose not a plan of reconciliation?

(3.) *But the unbelief which is the most extraordinary, is that of the neglecters of salvation.*

Conduct such as yours, if exemplified in common affairs, would justly expose you to the charge of inconsistency and irrationality. You say that you believe the gospel to be of God; and yet you live in habitual opposition to its requirements:—you say that you believe in the existence of a God; and yet you go on day after day in a career which you know he must hate. You say that you believe that he is a just God, and that he will be your Judge; yet you continually defy his authority, and expose yourselves to his vengeance:—you say that you believe this, and that you believe much more than this; and yet you are quite content to go on as if you were exposed to no danger, or knew of no Saviour. Oh! how unreasonable such conduct as this.

Penitent sinner, is not your unbelief unreasonable? You profess to repent of all your sins, yet you will not come to the Saviour; can there be greater sin than this? By whom has the power to repent been given? Is it not the Holy Spirit who has awakened, and who is still striving with you? How is it, then, that you still present the resistance of unbelief.

XLIX.

THE RENT VAIL.

MATTHEW xxvii. 51.—“And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom.”

The event recorded in the words now read, is one of most extraordinary character, and can only be accounted for on the supposition of a direct providential interference. The place—the temple: the object rent—that which intervened betwixt the court of the people and the most holy place. *There* was the symbol of the Divine presence, guarded from approach by most express and minute regulations.

In this event notice,

I. THE INTIMATIONS CONVEYED THEREBY.

1. *This event intimated that the ceremonial dispensation was now abolished.*

Into the holy place none were permitted to enter but the high priest alone, and he but once a year, and only then with the blood of the annual atonement. But now it is exposed to public view; the design of its institution having been accomplished, God himself has thrown it open; thereby intimating that it is of no further use, but that another way of propitiating him is established.

2. *That the barrier betwixt Jew and Gentile is thrown down.*

The offerings presented in the holy place, were for the Jewish people only. The annual atonement was for them. The high priest approached the mercy-seat for them only; the covenant laid up in the ark was for them alone. But now an atonement has been made for the whole world: now they that were afar off, “strangers to the covenant of promise, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, without hope, and without God,” are “brought nigh by the blood of the cross.” Now a new covenant is established, in which the Lord calls them his people “who were not his people.”

3. *That the way to the holiest of all is opened.*

The way into the holy place was with the blood and incense; the way to heaven is through the blood and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has not only abolished separation, but brought life and immortality to light. The mists which hung over the future have been dissipated by the rising of the sun of righteousness, who has shed life, fertility, and beauty, over the entire prospect.

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT AFFORDED THEREBY.

In the rending of the vail we have exhibited,

1. *The gracious designs of God concerning us.*

He would have us no longer to be on the outside of the temple,

"far off" from him. He would have us freed from all the evils of separation; he would have us enjoy all the pleasures that are at his right hand for evermore.

This event ought to teach us,

2. *Frequently to approach within the veil.*

There is nothing to hinder our approach; we are not confined to stated periods; the more frequently we come, the more welcome we shall be.

3. *Let us place all our confidence within the veil.*

Let us have the anchor of our hope there, sure and steadfast; thither the Forerunner has entered.

B.

L.

THE INCARNATION.

LUKE. II. 14.—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Such was the song of the heavenly host who accompanied the angel that announced to the shepherds the birth of a Saviour in the city of David. The design and results of the incarnation form the theme of their exultations.

Here we have exhibited the great truth, that the incarnation was,

I. A BRIGHT REVELATION OF THE GLORY OF GOD.

Angels had ever enjoyed an unclouded view of God. His character and ways, no doubt, through thousands of years, had been the objects of their profoundest contemplations; they had beheld the unveiled glory of Deity; but never had there been a manifestation of his glory equal to this. They had beheld justice shine forth in the punishment of the fallen spirits; they had beheld something like mercy in the suspension of the sentence on guilty man; but now they see justice and mercy uniting to effect his salvation.

The song of the angels intimates, that with the incarnation is connected.

II. PEACE ON EARTH.

Sin has made the earth a scene of a threefold war.

1. *There is the war in every man's own bosom.*

The highly figurative description of the inspired writer is exemplified in the experience of every man. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest." The mind of man is in a state of constant turmoil. There is no peace with the passions, with the affections, with the appetites, to the conscience. But Christ in the gospel bringeth peace, "peace which passeth understanding."

2. *War between man and man.*

Sin has armed every man against his brother. Strife, envy, jealousy, oppression, and ambition produce interminable jars, discords, and hostilities. But Christ came to teach and to enable us to love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us. By the influence of his gospel, weapons of warfare are turned into instruments of social comfort and of general good.

3. *War between man and his Maker.*

Sin is rebellion against God; it is open opposition to his government; it is defiance of his authority and power. Sin has not only separated us from God, it has armed him against us, it has unsheathed the sword of justice, it has kindled the flame of wrath. But Christ is "our peace." He is the "daysman" betwixt us. He has taken away the enmity, nailing it to his cross.

We learn from the song of the heavenly host, that the incarnation was,

III. A MARVELLOUS DISPLAY OF THE GOOD WILL OF GOD TO MAN.

The good will displayed in redemption is altogether without parallel. *God became man.* It is entirely disinterested. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." It was altogether unmerited. "God commendeth his love towards us," in that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Oh! if the contemplation of this most interesting subject yielded such satisfaction, and called forth such exultation in the angelic host, who were but remotely interested in its benefits, with what feelings ought we to regard it, who are the peculiar objects of all its provisions? Ought we to be silent in such a cause. No, let us laud and magnify his name; let us proclaim in every company, and to all our associates, the Saviour's name; let us be instant, in season and out of season, in telling to others the wonders of redeeming love.

S.

LI.

CHRIST'S VISITS BESOUGHT.

LUKE iv. xlii.—"The people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, so that he should not depart from them."

At this distance of time, and with our more correct knowledge of Christ, we ardently wish to have been among those who welcomed rather than among those who spurned him. Are we then prepared to act as those Galilæans did, for we have as much opportunity now as they had then, to detain him?

Let us consider,

I. WHY THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST AMONG US IS DESIRABLE.

1. *Because of the high honour it confers upon us.*

When the monarch of this nation visits any part of her dominions, what interest is awakened by the circumstance. They erect arches, they engrave inscriptions, they place all wealth and art under tribute to give expression to their satisfaction. But no language is equal to the task of describing the insignificance of such an event compared to the coming of the King of Glory into a place. Where he is, there is infinite power, boundless knowledge, pardoning mercy, everlasting love. What honour can approach that of his visit?

2. *Because he is the source of all good to his church.*

It is only when he is present that any good can come to his people. There is a wilderness where he is not, a rich and fruitful garden where he is. Nothing can live where he is absent, nothing die where he is present. He is the head of his church (Col. i.), and therefore the fountain of life, intelligence, union, happiness, and usefulness. John xv. 5. Our Christian prosperity is in proportion, not to our external privileges, but to the degree in which Christ blesses them to us, and by means of them enters into our hearts.

3. *Because he alone awakens the ungodly.*

The people in Capernaum wished to detain him because he had done what no one else could do: heal the sick and cast out devils. With how much intenser desire should we seek his continued presence, seeing he only can call sinners from their graves and make them live! What language can depict the consequences of a soul's conversion! It fills heaven with joy where there is "fulness of joy," it glorifies the Father who is the "God of glory," it makes brightness itself more bright. This we can secure only by securing Christ's company. We may therefore well plead with him, and entreat his stay. (See Jer. xiv. 8, 9.)

II. BY WHAT MEANS MAY WE INDUCE CHRIST TO FAVOUR US WITH HIS PRESENCE.

1. *We must cherish a high sense of its value.*

It is true he has been often "found of them that sought not after him;" but ordinarily, with respect to his own people, he regulates his favours by the sense which they display of the value of them. When his ancient people went after other gods he retired from them, and said he would return to his place until they sought him anew (Jer. xiii. 17). If, when on earth, he was received with hesitancy, he did not many mighty works among that people (Mark vi. 5). It is therefore of importance that we have our minds filled with thoughts of his excellency and glory, so that we shall prize him above all (Ps. iv. 6, 7).

2. *We must have a just sense of our own unworthiness of such a favour.*

If we ask the presence of Jesus under any presumption that we are entitled to it, we shall reap disappointment. Christ will dwell only with him who is "poor and of a contrite spirit, and who

trembleth at his word :” his blessings have an affinity with that class of feelings. Look to the spirit of David (1 Chron. xxix. 11) and of Solomon (2 Chron. vi. 14—18). Thus must we disavow all title to such an honour, and take with an humble though confiding submissiveness the marvellous mercy he gives.

3. *We must correct in our souls all that displeases him.*

We cannot expect him to dwell in any place where he meets with opposition and insult. It is true that it is his presence alone which can cast out whatever is unholy; but when he expresses himself willing to come and grant us that presence, and we do not as far as lies within our sphere of action prepare the way for him, he will not tarry. He is sensitive to the treatment he meets with at the hands of his own people; and, although he may not utterly cast them off, he witholds from them those bright manifestations of his presence which are more precious than gold, yea, than “much fine gold.” Oh, how much we have lost by our sins, by our worldly-mindedness, by our tampering with temptation! “He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with gladness.”

4. *We must importune him in earnest prayer.*

This he has taught and told us to do. The instance in the text which he has caused to be recorded, is the same injunction in a practical form. Willingness is not an obstacle to prayer, but a reason for it. “Ask and it shall be given you,” for you ask a “Father.” In imploring temporal gifts, we must ask in moderation, and always with submission, “for who knoweth what is good for a man during all the days of his vain life;” but when we present our requests for the presence of Christ, we may reasonably let forth all the vehemency of our spirits, support our plea with all the promises of Scripture, and cease not until we have gained our point. “I will not (said Jacob) let thee go except thou bless me,” and “he blessed him there.” So at Pentecost, (Acts ii.)

C. M. B.

LII.

HOW TO HEAR THE GOSPEL.

LUKE viii. 18.—“Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.”

To many persons this must seem a very unnecessary caution. If it had been, “Take heed how ye speak,” or “Take heed how ye act,” it would have seemed reasonable; but as to the manner of hearing nothing appears more easy. Yet it was not from one ignorant of human affairs, or unacquainted with what was most necessary for man, that these words proceeded. There must have been some reason for them. Let us therefore enquire,

I. WHY THE COMMAND SHOULD BE GIVEN ?

1. The *nature* of the truth claiming our audience is of great importance. When we hear news from foreign lands, of revolutions and changes, our interest is created and we hear with eagerness. But all such information is unspeakably inferior to what meets us in the sanctuary—tidings which reveal the will of the most high towards sinful man, which unfold the mysteries of incarnate love and the grace of the Holy Spirit, which discover the solemnities of the final judgment and the abodes of heaven and hell.

2. The *manner* in which that truth is made known, increases the solemnity of its communication. It comes accompanied by the King of kings; for whoever utters his truth faithfully does so in his presence. "Lo," said he, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world." It is one of the most remarkable and most thrilling facts, that the being who fills heaven and earth with his presence, and before whom we shall stand on the last day, brings unto us every word of his own truth, and marks the manner in which we receive it. It is this which lifts these assemblies above all others.

3. The *consequences* of that truth to men, form another reason for seriousness. There are some subjects described and argued in our hearing, which have no higher effect than to contribute to amusement or information. These are of value in their own places, but fall to the distance of infinitude beneath that which solicits our attention in the house of God. A man may be ignorant of science and yet have eternal life; but if he be ignorant of Christ he must perish. He may neglect many branches of knowledge without blame; but if he hear and neglect the gospel, he incurs the highest form of condemnation. It is therefore of the greatest importance to hear aright.

II. HOW THE COMMAND IS TO BE OBEYED.

We must hear,

1. With *attention*.

There are some who never listen until their attention is "arrested;" i. e., unless something in a statement or in the manner in which it is uttered compels them to attend. But it is the part of reason to summon the mind to vigilance, and keep it wakeful. When Moses saw a bush burning, he beheld no uncommon sight; but, observing that it was not consumed, he said thoughtfully, "I will turn aside and see this great sight," and when he arrived at it he heard the voice of God. The steps were gradual, and at first had small promise of leading to such a conclusion. The Lord did not speak to Elijah in the thunder and the earthquake which assaulted his senses, but in the "still small voice" which required him to come to the mouth of the cave to collect his faculties, and to listen attentively.

2. With *candour*.

A man may refuse to believe charges against himself, or he

may open his heart to consider them. Like the monarch who thrust away a messenger, who came to forewarn him of danger, saying, "Serious things to-morrow,"—so, many hearers put away from them all solemn messages. We should come to the house of God remembering our sinfulness, calling to mind our unfaithfulness, and convinced that there is much more impiety in our hearts than we have discovered, and so we shall be ready to say, not "That is such an one," but "Lord, it is I."

3. With *obedience*.

It is surprising how the conscience will acquire peace by merely having felt aright upon any subject. The emotion is deemed sufficient; the regret adequate; the intention a proper conclusion. This is the position of many: they are not scornful, not profane, not disrespectful, not even insensible,—but they do not advance beyond their intentions. They "hear Christ's sayings and do them not." What we have to do must be done quickly. Time is too short to be squandered, opportunities are too fleeting to be let slip. When we hear we should obey.

4. With *prayer*.

The necessity of entreaty is especially urgent when we come to hear the words of God. No man ever comes to the sanctuary with prayer who does not obtain a blessing. If the day of holy rest were to us a day of prayer; a day begun in the closet with prayer; a day in which we traverse the streets with prayer; a day in which we perform every word of praise and exhortation with prayer; a day in which we carried our families, friends, neighbours, and fellow sinners, to the throne of grace by prayer—we should find the gospel the very "power of God unto salvation" unto ourselves, and unto those for whom we had supplicated.

C. M. B.

LIII.

RESPONSIBILITY.

LUKE xii. 42.—"Who then is that faithful and wise steward?"

The annual recurrence* of this interesting solemnity, presents many subjects for consideration of an highly impressive character. We are now reminded that our life is lessened by the subtraction of another year—soon life itself will terminate. Questions of solemn import ought at this period especially to engage our consideration:—What is the character of our present state of being? What is the character of that state of existence to which we are hastening? What is the connexion subsisting betwixt the present and the future? Is the future existence identified with the pre-

* Delivered on a Watch-night.

sent? Are they the same existence? Will the character of this influence the condition of that?

In directing our attention to the text, let us look,

I. AT THE CHARACTER,

A "steward."

The idea connected with the office of a steward is, responsibility. It supposes a situation of great trust, held under another, to whom he is accountable. The truth intimated by the use of this expression is, that man's present state is one for which he is held responsible, and for the use of which he will have to give an account.

Amongst other things with which men are intrusted, we may enumerate time, influence, wealth, and religious privileges.

1. *All men are intrusted with time.*

The character of our present life is probationary. This life is intimately connected with that which is to come; indeed, so much so, that the character formed on earth clings to us through the midway passage, and fixes the happiness or misery of our everlasting future. Time is the mould in which we receive an impression for eternity. We are candidates for heaven or hell, and time is the period allowed to form the character which is to fit us for either one or the other. And it is a truth worth remembering, that we have no more time than is actually necessary to form our character. If, then, we form a wrong character; if we do not employ our time in attaining the great end of our existence, shall we not be called to account for this wretched misappropriation, and be dealt with accordingly?

2. *All men are intrusted with influence.*

The observation is trite, but no less true, that each individual exerts some kind of influence on all who form the circle of his acquaintance. However poor his condition; however meagre his capacity; however impoverished his intellect—his example or opinion influences some to either good or evil. This influence is felt in every social relation. It is found in parents and children, masters and servants, companions and friends, in every relation and in every condition.

3. *Some are intrusted with wealth.*

Wealth, rightly used, gives its possessor a wider sphere of action, and therefore of influence. The conduct of the wealthy is more frequently imitated, and their opinions are received with greater deference, than those of the poorer classes. Many men employ their wealth for their own individual interests, instead of using it for the benefit of the many. Some professing Christians ask themselves how little they should give, instead of how little they ought to keep. Men are intrusted with wealth, that they may, as instruments, aid in the furtherance of God's moral government of the world, and all wealth that is not thus used is misappropriated.

The Christian who is intrusted with wealth, ought to employ it in promoting the cause of Christ amongst men; and they who

do not do so rob God. Sometimes men ask how much they are expected to give to the cause of God. Just as reasonable, and just as honest, are the conduct and principles of such men, as would be those of a clerk who should ask how much of his employer's money he should spend in promoting the interests of his employer. The whole of your wealth belongs to God; and all of it, excepting that which is necessary to your sustenance, and that of your family, ought to be employed for him. If the wealth which members of the church are hoarding up, were at once poured into its treasury, there would be then means of sending the gospel to every nation under heaven placed at its disposal, and soon we might expect to hear the anthem, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." But, instead of placing all your property at the disposal of the church, you act with it as though you were afraid that the world would be converted too soon.

4. *We are intrusted with religious privileges.*

We have the public and private means of grace; we have the reading and the preaching of God's holy Word; we have the ordinances of the sanctuary. But especially we are responsible for the *use we make of the discoveries of the gospel.*

Here our character is exhibited as guilty, and our condition represented as dangerous; here we are informed of a remedy; here we are pointed to a Saviour. We are responsible also for the *influence which is brought to bear upon us by the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Spirit makes the discoveries of the gospel available to our welfare. He enlightens the mind, alarms the conscience, affects the heart. He is always working; in every means of grace his influence is more or less felt; he puts it into the power of all to repent and believe. For these privileges we are accountable; not merely for the means of grace, but for every particle of information we get there, for every ray of light there thrown on our minds, for every operation of the Holy Spirit on our hearts.

II. AT THE ENQUIRY,

"Who then is that *faithful and wise steward?*"

It is very evident that this character does not belong to the man of the world—to him who is greedy of gain. Nor to those good-natured, harmless kind of people, who, because they have never been guilty of any flagrant crimes, are, in their own estimation, in good condition for the heavenly inheritance. Much less does it belong to the open profligate.

It belongs to him,

1. *Who is faithful to the trust reposed in him.*

He devotes resolutely all his powers to his Lord's service. He spends his time, influence, wealth, and religious advantages, for the advancement of the Saviour's cause amongst men. For this he eats, drinks, labours, prays. This he knows to be the object for which he lives—and he lives to attain it. He does this whatever may be

the sacrifices attendant on such a course, or however numerous its temptations. Many are his sacrifices, but he disregards them; numerous are his temptations, but he overcomes them.

It belongs to him,

2. *Who lives in habitual contemplation of the account he has to render.*

"When his Lord cometh he is found watching."

He watches with anxiety—he eagerly looks out for the coming of his Lord. Not knowing *when* he will appear, but knowing that the day is rapidly approaching, that it may come suddenly, he waits for it, and is *prepared* for it. Herein is the wisdom of his conduct—faithfulness to his trust is preparation for the coming of his Lord. He knows that he will come, and that when he comes an account will have to be rendered—he is always prepared—always ready.

III. AT THE APPROBATION WHICH WILL BE BESTOWED ON SUCH A CHARACTER.

"Happy is that man whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."

Our Lord pronounces him "happy," and he is so because he possesses a knowledge of his Lord's favour, including in it pardon of all past sin, and assurance of grace to the end. This approbation is given when the term of probation is ended; and the trials, and difficulties, and temptations of his former lot affect him now no more—they form things that have been, but will never be again; they are now matters of history, not of anticipation. He is safe for ever. This approbation is conferred before the assembled universe! They who made him the butt of their ridicule and scorn, witness it. They used to laugh at his anxiety about the future; they used to throw obstacles in his way; but now he is elevated to the happiness of heaven, while they are dismissed to the agonies of hell.

IN CONCLUSION.

1. Learn the importance of acquiring a right character for eternity. Every day that you live you *are* forming a character—you are now forming habits which will cling to you for ever! O what kind of character are you forming? Entertain the question, we implore you; do not put it away from you. What is your present character? You are at this moment either a child of God or the offspring of hell.

2. *Whatever be your present character, ere your probation terminates it may be changed.*

This is a solemn truth, which ought frequently to engage the children of God in devout and careful self-examination. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

This ought to lead the sinner at once to God. Your character may now be changed. You may find that *now* is the accepted time, if you will avail yourself of the influence which is now passing over G.

LIV.

ROOM FOR SINNERS.

LUKE xiv. 22.—“Yet there is room?”

Our Saviour introduced this parable at a feast, and on the occasion of a remark made by one of the guests. He not only intimates in it the glorious provision made for sinners, but sketches the whole scheme of providence towards our world: the call, refusal, and rejection of the Jews, and the turning to a people which had not aforetime been numbered among the nations, that from among them guests in eternal glory might be drawn. We live at the moment when the words of the text are supposed to have been uttered. The messengers sent to bring in those who were nearest to the Jews having returned and said that there was yet room, are sent forth to remoter places and at a later period to complete the number of such as shall be saved.

There are therefore two questions, the answers to which will include things of urgent consequence to us, viz.

I. WHERE IS THERE ROOM?

1. *There is room in the love of God.*

Love is the nature of God. As his nature is infinite, his love is infinite. He is from everlasting: from everlasting is his love. The universe is full of himself: the universe therefore is full of his love. All his perfections, though diverse in form, are but expressions of his love. When he commiserates the miserable, we call it pity; when he favours the undeserving, we call it grace; when he bears long with rebels, we call it patience; when performing promises, we call it truth—but all flows from the single fountain—love. “The Lord is good to all;” multitudes have found a home in his goodness, and yet there is room.

2. *There is love in the work of Christ.*

Whatever application of the atonement the Father may make to individual souls, its sufficiency is co-extensive with the crimes of man. When Jesus died on the cross his sacrifice was for not Jew or Gentile, but for man as man. The sacred writers offer pardon to every soul of man through him. “Where sin abounded,” say they, “grace did *much more* abound.” “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life;” no matter who—no matter how many come unto him, “his blood cleanseth us from *all* sin.” Thousands have come, thousands are coming, “and yet there is room.”

3. *There is room in the churches of the Saints.*

It is a striking expression and attestation of the divine solicitude for sinners, that many human hearts in all parts of the world are lighted up with earnest compassion for, and pant to bid them

welcome to Christ. Not only does the Holy Spirit in his word and by his secret operations unite them, but the church by her prayers, her watchfulness, her advice, and her holy example, seconds the invitation. "The spirit and the bride say come;" the divine and the human blend their agency; heaven and earth join together, and proclaim that "yet there is room."

II. WHEN IS THERE ROOM?

This is a question of extreme importance.

1. *Not when the invitation is finally rejected.*

There is not a single occasion on which the gospel is proposed on God's part that an answer is not given on man's part. A sinner may think little of his refusal, but it is solemnly recorded; and although no man can say how many such refusals amount to a positive barrier of salvation, or serve to close the door of the feast, yet that that result may follow, is rendered certain by Christ's teaching in this parable. The people to whom the invitation was first sent refused it; they did so, not contemptuously; not as infidels or blasphemers, but with great politeness and apparent reasonableness; but their declination was final, and to them thenceforth it was as if there were no room.

2. *Not when the invitation is finally withheld.*

God has seen meet sometimes to take away from a people, or a person, the opportunity of salvation. Jesus spake these words in Judea; but when the people heard them not, he left them. The truth then moved westward and blessed many cities; but they too, proving unfaithful, were abandoned, and Smyrna, Sardis, and Philadelphia are to this day affecting monuments of rejected mercy. Other lands were then blessed, but now are covered with papal darkness. It may be that our land will be dealt with in the same manner. When truth will be chased into corners, and preachers silenced in prisons, and thousands die for lack of knowledge, then it shall be as if there were no room.

Remarks:—

1. Those who partake of this feast should earnestly invite others to come while "yet there is room."

2. Those who have not complied with the invitation should do so without delay; and that though they be no better prepared than the houseless and robeless wanderers by highways and hedges. Nothing should prevent them. There is no business like this business.

B.

LV.

WHERE ORDINARY MEANS DO NOT AVAIL, EXTRAORDINARY WILL BE EQUALLY INEFFECTUAL.

LUKE xvi. 31.—“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

Many individuals, when the subjects of the strivings of God's Holy Spirit, defer the period of repentance, under the impression that these are not the means which will be taken to effect their conversion, but that something more extraordinary, something out of the way, is essential, and will be employed. That such individuals are labouring under a fatal mistake, will be evident by considering the statement of the text; a statement which is connected with a narrative in which the case is put in the strongest possible light—“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

I. LET US EXAMINE THE PROPOSITION OF THE TEXT, THAT WHERE ORDINARY MEANS DO NOT AVAIL FOR THE SALVATION OF MEN, EXTRAORDINARY WOULD BE EQUALLY INEFFECTUAL.

1. In the case supposed in the text, were one to rise from the dead, he could not give us clearer or more comprehensive information on the things which relate to our peace than this book already reveals.

2. Neither could he give us clearer evidence of the truth of his statements than we already possess in authenticity of our own scriptures.

3. Nor could he produce those changes in the heart and conduct which are essential to godly repentance, and which it is the office of the Holy Spirit to work out amongst men.

From these considerations it is evident, that were there to be an extraordinary messenger to an individual on the subject of his salvation, it would be as ineffectual as any other means that may have been tried.

II. WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS FLOWING FROM THIS SUBJECT.

1. The utter inefficacy of all means excepting the ordinary modes of bringing sinners to repentance and faith.

2. How unreasonable, impious, and ungrateful, to desire God to employ other means for your salvation than those employed in the case of others! Unreasonable—for if these are sufficient to salvation, why expect others to be employed? Impious—for if these are the means thought by God to be the best, why oppose your will and judgment to his?

3. How unwise to expect extraordinary means, if these would

be useless! How unwise to defer salvation in expectation of that which will never be granted, and if granted, be of no avail.

4. How inexcusable the folly, and how aggravated the guilt, of those who still defer salvation! You believe there is a God, yet tremble not at his power. You believe you have a deathless spirit, lying under sentence to interminable woe, yet put forth no effort for its salvation. You believe there is a Saviour—yet apply not to him. You believe that without the Holy Spirit you cannot perform the conditions required from you—yet you are continually pursuing the course that is most likely to grieve him away, and cause him to leave you to yourself and your devices. You believe that in little time you will be no longer an inhabitant of earth, but that you will have passed to the bourne from whence no traveller returns—yet never ask yourselves the question,

“Where shall we find our destined place,
Shall we our everlasting days,
With fiends or angels spend?”

N.

LVI.

INCREASE OF FAITH.

LUKE xvii. 5.—“And the apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith.”

The importance of faith to vital godliness is not only proved by the word of God; it is also attested by individual experience. The measure and degree of Christian holiness, the warmth and fervency of Christian affection; the attainments in Christian standing and character, depend in an eminent degree on the measure of faith which we possess. Faith in its principle is susceptible of degrees; a weak and timid faith presupposes its existence; it may be strengthened by exercise, it may be increased in its power.

I. THE INCREASE OF FAITH IN ITS PRINCIPLE.

1. *Faith as a principle must have means of existence.*

It may be the fruit of teaching, the teaching of the Spirit in the word of God. Weakness of the principle of faith, in this view of it, cannot be charged on any defect in the holy scriptures; for there all the truth we require is full and complete. It may sometimes be chargeable on a defective ministry; a ministry which does not exhibit the entire truth, or that preaches error. Or, faith may be weak, or may not exist at all, not from any defect in the exhibition of truth and duty, for these may be set forth in their due proportions; not from any fault in the understanding, but from the fault of the heart.

2. *Faith in its principle is the fruit of promise.*

No specific act of faith can take place without it has the warrant of the promise of God. There is nothing deserved from God in the way of blessing, but quite the reverse. None of the blessings of the gospel could therefore be the subjects of faith, unless they were previously the subjects of promise. If, then, promises are imperfectly apprehended, faith must be feeble and weak.

3. *Faith, in its principle, is of the operation of God the Spirit.*

This is the highest sense of the term. Faith, as the fruit of the Spirit, is a religious principle—not exercised naturally, but the result of the Spirit's power and agency. The act of believing is the act of the person who is the subject of such agency. The power of faith may exist, and yet not be exercised.

II. THE EXERCISES OF FAITH MAY NOT BE EQUAL TO THE OCCASION CALLING FOR THOSE EXERCISES.

The faith which is found sufficient for some circumstances would not be sufficient for others. Abraham dwelling in patriarchal simplicity, and Abraham offering up Isaac—Jacob dwelling in the land of promise, blessed with plenty and surrounded by his family, and Jacob in the midst of famine, in the loss of his flocks and deprived of his sons—Moses as shepherd of his father-in-law's flocks, and Moses the lawgiver of Israel—would each require, in these varied circumstances, different degrees of faith. The faith which would support in the former, would be found quite inadequate to the latter state. The Christian dwelling in the midst of friends of the Redeemer, and the same Christian exposed to the buffeting, toils, and anxieties of the world; the Christian in health, and the same Christian in affliction, in prosperity, in adversity—will require degrees of faith according to these varying circumstances.

III. THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH TEND TO WEAKEN FAITH MAKE THE PRAYER OF THE TEXT NECESSARY.

1. *Faith ought to be vigorous irrespective of outward circumstances; but this is a difficult attainment.*

2. *The want of spiritual joys often tends to weaken faith.*

A man may retain his acceptance with God, and yet may not always enjoy an equal amount of comfort, peace, and joy. In circumstances in which the amount of joy is lessened, it will be a great difficulty to maintain that kind of faith which is necessary to the life of the soul. It is not an everyday experience. "Though he slay me yet will I trust him."

3. *The circumstances of the Christian are often changing.*

The aspect of surrounding things is sometimes bright, at others gloomy. The state is frequently changed, in order to call out faith into more vigorous exercise.

4. *It is important that faith should exist in vigour.*

It is necessary to God's glory, to the Saviour's glory, and our own peace; we ought therefore to use all the means in our power to get our faith increased. "Lord, increase our faith."—D.

LVII.

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE SAVIOUR'S
COMPASSION.

LUKE xix. 41.—“As he drew near he beheld the city, and wept over it.”

The scene here described, took place during the last public entry of our Saviour into Jerusalem. The circumstances were altogether of an exciting nature. He had just performed the most splendid miracle of his life, the fame of it had reached the city, and drew numbers of its inhabitants to the spot; he was now proceeding towards the city, arrayed according to the prediction of ancient prophecy, which was thus receiving its fulfilment. His disciples, his friends, and the multitudes, in a state of great enthusiasm, were spreading their garments in his way; and, breaking down the branches of the palm, waved them in the air, rending the heavens with their glad acclamations of praise. The sound of their approach reached the yet distant city, and a greater multitude issued out of its gates to welcome the approach of the “King of Zion.” Up to a certain point in his progress the city was hid from his view; he was ascending a hill which intervened, and, just as he reached its summit, the two streams met, and joining together in one strain of rapturous exultation, exclaimed, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Unmoved by their excitement, untouched by their proceedings, no sooner does he behold the city, than he wept over it. What could be the occasion of these tears? Was it that he was affected by the instability of popular applause? Was it on account of the subsequent ingratitude of those around him? Was it because he knew that many of these who now hailed his approach to the city so joyfully, would in a few days follow him through the gate on its opposite side, crying, “Away with him?”

The text illustrates the nature and exhibits the extent of our Lord's compassion.

I. IT ILLUSTRATES ITS NATURE.

1. *It was poignant sorrow.*

“He wept over it.”

Jesus Christ was a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief; this was his character; yet there are but three instances on record, in which he is said to have wept:—at the grave of Lazarus; on this occasion; and in Gethsemane. To weep implies sorrow of no common character. And for him to weep, who possessed more than human fortitude, expresses the intensity of his sorrow.

2. *It was disinterested sorrow.*

“He wept over it.”

It was no common object that could suffice to draw tears from the Son of God, acquainted as he was with the human grief in

all its varieties, and in all its extent. It was the city, with its teeming population, to which he was proceeding, that he might receive the crowning act of its ingratitude, in the shedding of his own blood, over which he wept. The days of that city were numbered; the time of its probation was ended; the days of its mercy were past; and Christ wept because of it.

II. IT EXHIBITS ITS EXTENT.

Very mistaken are some of the notions which prevail on the extent of the Saviour's compassion. The way in which this subject is sometimes treated, would intimate that our Saviour is capricious and changeable; the reverse of this is the fact. The extent of this compassion is exhibited in,

1. *Its objects.*

They are those of whom we are informed that the things belonging to their peace were hid from their eyes. They were judicially blinded. A long course of impenitence had hardened their hearts and blinded their eyes, so that seeing they saw not, and hearing they heard not. The truths in which they were so much interested, though heard by the outward ear, never penetrated the mind, never touched the heart. The difficulties in the way of their salvation arose, not so much from the number of their sins and the magnitude of them, as from the state of their hearts. They over whom the Saviour wept, had placed themselves beyond the reach of his saving power. He had done all he could do for them, consistently with his character and the principles of his moral government. The influences which he exerts on the mind are in accordance with the laws of the mental and moral economy. There is no coercion of the will; the influence of the Holy Spirit is suasive; the will is left free; it is never forced. The Saviour, in looking over Jerusalem, saw that the majority of its population never would yield, and he wept because of it.

2. *Look at it in the extent of its duration.*

The truth which is here so forcibly and affectingly exhibited, is, that the finally impenitent, notwithstanding their wilful and infatuated refusal of his mercy, nevertheless continue the objects of the Saviour's love and compassion. It would be some alleviation of the misery of the lost, if they could but feel that the feelings of Christ towards them had undergone a change—if they could but think that he hated them—oh no! the Saviour looks over the lost impenitent with the same feelings of compassion with which he regarded them when in all sincerity he tendered them his mercy, and wrought upon them by his Spirit. It will be the full conception of this truth that creates and sustains the despair of the bottomless pit; for every damned spirit is aware, that if it were consistent with the Saviour's character, *if it could be*, he would save them. "There remaineth now no more sacrifice for sins." No means could be employed which would

reach their case, else they would be—and the damned know this, hence their eternal despair.

And now let us attempt,

III. THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THIS SUBJECT.

1. *The extraordinary guilt of impenitence.*

When the Saviour wept over Jerusalem, the number of its sins, and the magnitude of its guilt, were full in his view; but while these doubtless had their influence on his mind, those powerful emotions which are described in the text, were specially called forth by its impenitence. It were an easy matter to prove that all the unconverted in our congregations are great sinners; that their sins are many, and that they are much aggravated on account of surrounding circumstances; but the chief feature in your guilty character is your impenitence; the charge against you is, *Neglect of the gospel!* Refusal of mercy! Resistance to the Spirit! In continuing impenitent you reject him who, from compassion, left the bosom of his Father, to die on the cross for you. He invites you; but you will not come. He pledges to receive you with open arms; but you will not come. There is nothing in his person; nothing in his mercy; nothing in his cross; nothing in his truth, to engage *your* affection, or to subdue your obduracy. He in his gospel, and the Spirit by his strivings, are continually endeavouring to win you; but you will not be won. Sabbaths that have smiled with mercy are gone; sermons which interested you, and almost persuaded you to be Christians, have left you senseless and indifferent. The goodness which once moved you, has now lost its charm. The judgment that once agitated your soul, now only irritates—you continue impenitent.

2. *Its imminent and dangerous consequences.*

The influence of impenitence is to hurry impetuously all who are its subjects into the condition of those over whom the Saviour wept, as recorded in the text; a condition out of which they cannot be delivered—a condition which renders damnation inevitable. Oh that you would consider your ways! The Saviour is doing great things in order to save you, but in a little while and you will be in a condition in which he can do no more; you will be lost, lost through your own obduracy. Every sabbath, every sermon, is hastening you to the ranks of those who have been given up to judicial blindness. The next sentence which may pass from the lips of Jehovah concerning you, may be, "Why should they be stricken any more?" and then your damnation is inevitable—damnation! fearful word. Oh! well might the Saviour weep over those who were hurrying to damnation: well may he weep, for he knows the worth of eternity, and of the soul. He has an infinite impression of the bitter undying sorrow which constitutes the portion of the lost. Can we tell, think you, what is lost in losing heaven, or what will be suffered by plunging into

hell? O tell us, if you can, what is the "blackness of darkness," what "everlasting destruction!" O tell us, can you form any adequate conception of the miseries of the damned? An immortal soul lost! lost for ever! We know not what it is; the more we try to comprehend it, the more amazing and tremendous does it appear. We have no line to fathom that abyss—but Christ knows it all. He sees the whole ocean of wrath, bottomless and boundless; he sees the soul always sinking under accumulating wrath; he sees it always beginning to suffer—a beginning without an end, and he weeps over it. He weeps over you now; for you are now impenitent, and, unless you repent, you must perish.

G.

LVIII.

THE LAMB OF GOD.

JOHN 1. 29.—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Let us direct our attention,

I. TO THE TITLE HERE GIVEN TO CHRIST.

"The Lamb of God."

1. *It may be given to point out his innocence, meekness, and patience.*

The lamb is proverbially harmless. Jesus Christ was characterised by the gentler virtues. He wanted not power, he could have crushed all his enemies at once; but mercy was his distinguishing characteristic. It was the spirit of his life—of his farewell charge—and of his last prayer.

2. *It intimates that he is the antitype of all the lambs slain under the Mosaic dispensation.*

The lamb of the daily sacrifice, that of the passover, that of the peace-offering, typified the oblation of Christ, and derived from it all their value. The death of Christ was exhibited in all the ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual.

3. *It is given because this is the Lamb of God's providing.*

"The Lord will provide a lamb," was the language of Abraham's faith; "in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." Here we have the prediction fulfilled. This is the sacrifice of God's choice, with whom it hath continual power, and to whom it shall bring everlasting glory.

II. THE MIGHTY WORK HERE ASCRIBED TO CHRIST.

"Taketh away the sin of the world."

Let us look at his sacrifice.

1. *In the mode of its efficacy.*

It taketh away sin. It expiates the guilt of sin. It delivers from the curse, and frees from the power, of sin, all who believe in the name of Christ. Sin could be expiated by no inferior victim. The fountain of life and of purity could only be opened at the foot of the cross. This atonement reaches to the most enormous crimes.

2. *In the continuance of its efficacy.*

It is spoken of as a *present* sacrifice—it is offered *now* in the end of the world. From age to age it retains its virtue; generation to generation proclaim its power. It is a sun which shines with unabated heat; a stream which flows with undiminished power.

3. *The extent of its efficacy.*

The Jews imagined that the blessing flowing from their Messiah, would, like their own sacrifices, be confined to themselves; but John teaches them that the world was received in his comprehensive embrace. The *extent of its efficacy* will be seen in the innumerable multitude of every kindred, nation, people, and tongue, who, as the redeemed, shall surround the throne. There is no guilt it cannot expiate, no sin beyond its power, no clime beyond its reach. He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

III. THE HOMAGE REQUIRED.

We are to study his character—confide in his sacrifice—regard him with reverence and affection—follow him as master and guide.

B—E.

LIX.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

JOHN III 14, 15.—“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

We have no ground to suppose that our Saviour here refers to the brazen serpent as a type of himself; but he seizes upon it as an event every way adapted as an illustration of his own character and work. Let us endeavour, in our interpretation of such subjects as this, to keep to those points in which the analogy is obvious. In the two events here referred to, there are several prominent points of similarity.

1. IN THE OCCASION.

In the twenty-first chapter of the book of Numbers we have the narrative of that transaction to which our Saviour refers.

1. *The people's sin.*

Their sin was an impeachment of the truth and goodness of God, who had promised them Canaan—fed them with angels'

food—brought them on their way by a series of signal interpositions. Yet they spake against God. The fact of their sin could not be denied—its guilt and impiety are unquestionable.

All men are open to a charge of a like nature. No truth is more evident, no fact better substantiated; it is written on every page of the Bible; it is manifested every day in the actions of men. The truth here charged is not that some men, many men, but that all have sinned. No exception can be made. Man and sinner are synonymous terms. It is worthy of remark, that our Lord, in this conversation, attempts no proof of the fact—he assumes it.

The charge is not affected by the number of sins. *One* sin exposed the Israelites to punishment; one sin expelled the rebel angels from heaven; one sin excluded our first parents from Paradise; one sin fixes the charge of sinner. If you have committed but one sin, the fact of it will cling to you for ever. You can never be other than a sinner.

2. *The punishment.*

In both cases it is,

(1.) *Of Divine origin.*

God sent fiery flying serpents—these serpents were probably termed fiery from their bite producing inflammation, such serpents are found in those parts of the world; but if the Israelites had not sinned, they would never have been visited by these serpents—God sent them. All men are alike exposed to the wrath of God. The state of every sinner is that of actual condemnation. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”

(2.) *Beyond human relief.*

The bite of the serpent was invariably followed by death. No doubt all that affection, interest, or self-preservation could do, was done, but all of no avail. And is it not so in the case of the sinner? Who can deliver him from the wrath of God? Who rescue him from the grasp of Omnipotence? Who drink for him the cup of righteous indignation?

II. THE REMEDY.

This also is,

1. *Of Divine appointment.*

The scheme of redemption originated with God—it is the offspring of his love. Man had no claims upon God but those of a condemned criminal.

2. *Adapted to the case.*

This is inferred from the fact, that it is the remedy provided by infinite wisdom. In this remedy are displayed all the riches of wisdom and knowledge. The scheme of redemption is called “the wisdom of God.”

“Even so must the Son of man be lifted up;” on another occasion our Lord said, “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all

men unto me ;” and then it is added, “ This he said, signifying what death he should die.” The lifting up of Christ refers to the death of the cross. To die on a cross was to die under a curse. The death of Christ was an atonement for human guilt. Without it, sin could not be pardoned nor the sinner saved. Every attribute of the Divine character surround, harmonize, and centre in the cross. Every thing required on the part of God—every thing needed in the case of man—are found there.

3. *To save from death.*

“ Might not perish.”

Men are in danger of perishing—of sinking down to the flames of hell—of being punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.

4. *The remedy, to be efficacious, requires personal application.*

It was not the mere elevation of the serpent which cured the Israelite ; he remained in dying circumstances till he looked at the serpent. Neither does the death of Christ of itself secure the salvation of the sinner. Many expect salvation merely because Christ died. The death of Christ has opened the way for God to forgive sin. It secures the salvation of the sinner in no other way than by making it safe, and honourable, and just, for God to forgive sin. It does not *dispose* God to be merciful ; he was disposed to save man, and the death of Christ furnishes the *means* of doing this, consistently with his holiness, justice, and truth. God has therefore enjoined faith in Christ, as the condition on which he bestows the blessings procured by his death. This faith requires, in the penitent, a sense of his condition—belief in the efficacy of the remedy—expectation of relief—entire trust of the soul. Faith admits of degrees—but here the lowest degree of saving faith insures salvation. The bitten Israelite might have weak sight, and not be able to see the serpent ; but if he did but turn his head in the right direction, he was cured. So with the penitent. He may not be able to see the connexion betwixt pardon and the death of Christ, he may have no very accurate conception of the design of that death ; but if he sincerely make the effort to believe, if he try to expect salvation through Christ, he is saved.

III. THE RESULTS.

The cure is,

1. *Certain.*

No Israelite could look and remain uncured. No sinner can believe and remain unsaved. All who believe are saved. There never was a case of failure. Sinners of every variety of character, of every age, and of every clime, have tried it, and have been saved.

2. *Instantaneous.*

The moment of exercising faith is the moment of cure.

K. G.

LX.

THE LOVE OF GOD TO MAN.

JOHN iii. 16.—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The love of God, manifest in the redemption and salvation of a lost and perishing world, is to be our theme on the present occasion.

I. THE OBJECT OF THIS LOVE.

“God loved the world.”

His love then was,

1. *Undeserved.*

The world is fallen from God. Man is a guilty, condemned sinner. He was holy—but he has fallen. He was good—he is now vile. He had the image of God—he is now deformed and polluted with sin. Yet guilty, unholy, fallen, vile, deformed, polluted, though he be, he is the object of the love of God.

2. *Disinterested.*

They who are the objects of it, could do nothing to purchase, or to procure it. Neither does their redemption add any thing to the happiness or glory of God,

3. *Unsolicited.*

If God loved the world, then he loved those by whom such love was unsolicited, nay, undesired. Man is altogether estranged from God; he is an alien; yet, estranged and alienated, God loved him.

II. THE GIFT BY WHICH THIS LOVE WAS MANIFESTED.

If God love the world, then he must manifest his love in a way worthy of himself. “He gave his only begotten Son.”

1. *The value of this gift.*

The gift bestowed was the Son of God; the only begotten Son of God. In some places in the scriptures, angels are called the sons of God; for they were created by him. Believers in Christ are called sons of God; they are so by adoption. But in neither of these senses, assuredly, can the Redeemer of the world be called Son of God, for he is termed the “only begotten.” He is the Son of God in a sense far higher than either of these; he participates in the nature of the Father; he is a Son in the Divine nature. If, then, he be a Divine person, it was an act of infinite love when this Son was bestowed to suffer death on the cross for the redemption of guilty man.

2. *The peculiar relation in which the gift stood to the Giver.*

He was the dear and only one in whom the Father delighted; yet his dear, his well-beloved, his only Son, he gave for the redemption of man. What must have been the love of God to man, when, sooner than man should perish without help and

without hope, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son?" Does not this teach us that a less valuable gift could not expiate human crime? Does not this teach us that a less price than this could not have effected man's redemption?

III. THE END THIS LOVE HAS ACCOMPLISHED.

"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

1. *Glance at the death we may escape.*

"Should not *perish*." A word of awful import. To "*perish*," is to be cast away. To "*perish*," is to be lost. To "*perish*," is to be undone. To "*perish*," means death in its most awful sense—it is everlasting death. To "*perish*," is to be shut out from God, from heaven—to be shut up in the regions of darkness and despair. But we need not perish, for there is deliverance.

2. *The life we may secure.*

"Everlasting life." In its beginning it is the experience of the favour of God—the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Spirit—the privilege of adoption—together with all the blessings connected with such exalted state. This is life—and this life is to be eternal. And now look,

3. *At the condition by which this end is secured.* "That whosoever believeth."

Observe that this great benefit, this everlasting life, as the result of the Redeemer's incarnation and vicarious sacrifice, is not dispensed indiscriminately, without qualification of character and circumstance. There must be submission to God's plan of salvation; there must be a cordial acceptance of the redeeming plan. There must be the trust of the heart in the efficacy of Christ's atonement.

N.

LXI.

SALVATION AND CONDEMNATION.

JOHN III. 19.—"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

If men were left destitute of any means of recovery from their dire apostasy, no moral obligation, or legal demand, could be required from them, regarding their spiritual character or general conduct. But man is not left destitute; he has the light of truth shining around him; and he is provided with means to obtain an alteration in his character, circumstances, and destiny. He is therefore accountable if he remain in his natural and therefore depraved state; he has no excuse—his remaining so is his own voluntary act.

I. MAN IS PROVIDED WITH THE MEANS OF SALVATION.

"Light is come into the world."

1. *All are favoured with the light of conscience.*

"He is that light which enlighteneth every man which cometh into the world." Conscience is the agent of the Holy Spirit, approving or disapproving the thoughts, feelings, and actions of men. It passes judgment instinctively upon the moral qualities of actions. So unerring are its awards, that until it is seared, and thereby powerless, every one feels when wrong is done, when evil is perpetrated.

2. *There is also the light of nature.*

The inferences which may be drawn respecting God and his character from surrounding objects. This also includes that traditionary knowledge of God which has never been entirely lost in any nation.

3. *But there is specially the light of revelation.*

This discloses man's real character and condition—it shows him to be fallen, guilty, depraved—it opens out to him a mode of recovery—a mode of recovery from his guilt, from his pollution, from his inclination to sin, into the favour, family, and life of God. This teaches man his duty, reveals his helplessness, points to the Holy Spirit as the author and source of all moral power, assures of his assistance, and so leaves without excuse all who have been visited by it.

II. MEN REJECT THE MEANS OF SALVATION.

"Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

1. *Men remain willingly ignorant of Christ and his gospel.*

Though by nature fallen, and by practice guilty; though totally unfit for heaven, and justly condemned to hell—they yet put forth no effort to secure the blessings of the new covenant. Without saving acquaintance with Christ, they can derive no benefit from him; but this they are willingly ignorant of.

2. *Men love a state of eternal security in preference to that of conviction and penitence.*

Men like to pursue the even tenor of their way without any thought of the future—for that would harass them. They shun every thing that tends to serious reflection; and when they are—as all men occasionally are—awakened by the Holy Spirit to the sight of their true state—they close their eyes again as speedily as possible, and so dismiss the unwelcome scene from their mental vision. This love of carnal security is not only manifest in the majority, who never attend the ordinances of religious worship, but also in the many who do. How many are there who stifle conviction the very instant it seizes upon their minds.

3. *Men love the darkness of sin rather than the light of holiness.*

The love of sin is the great feature of the human character. Sin is not an accident of our lives; it is the choice and love of our

hearts. No sin is involuntary. Every sin has the concurrence of the affections of the heart—every sin has its spring there. No man can love holiness until the Holy Spirit create him anew. And that love of sin is natural to the human heart, is evident from the refusal of men to come to the Holy Spirit to be born again.

III. THEY WHO THUS REJECT SALVATION ARE IN A STATE OF CONDEMNATION.

“And this is the condemnation.”

The cause of man's ruin originates in his rejection of Christ. This is the ground on which the sentence of condemnation is suspended. All men are actually condemned because they do not believe in Christ: “He that believeth not the Son—the wrath of God abideth on him.” The number of your sins may alarm you—their aggravated character may increase your danger; but that on account of which you are condemned—that which gives the edge to the sword of Divine justice—that which points the sting of the undying worm—that which gives its chief intensity to the fire of hell, is your not believing in Christ.

B—N.

LXII.

WANT OF THE LOVE OF GOD.

JOHN v. 42.—“But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.”

This is a very solemn and affecting charge, yet it is one capable of a wide range of application. Who is there whose life of thought, feeling, and action, is uniformly influenced by the love of God; yet who is there that can assert that such a claim as this implies, is unreasonable? The love of God in its reference to human motive and action, is to be our present subject.

Let us consider it,

I. IN THE PRINCIPLE OF ITS APPLICATION.

The exercise of love to God is the undoubted obligation of every intelligent creature. All the commands of God assume this; while the word of God teaches that no obedience is of any worth, in the estimation of the great Supreme, that has not its spring in love. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” was the brief summing up of the whole moral law, when it was being rehearsed in the hearing of the Israelites.—Deut. vi. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” was the teaching of him who is the end of the law for righteousness, as the sum and substance of the “law and the prophets.”—Matthew xxii. To love God and keep his commandments, are not two things, but one

thing. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

II. IN THE NUMBERS WHO ARE DESTITUTE OF IT.

All men left to the influence of their own carnal nature are destitute of this love. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And do you ask who are they that possess the "carnal mind?" We must reply in the words of the great Teacher, "He that is born of the flesh is flesh," and remains flesh till he is "born of the Spirit." While, then, any remain flesh—destitute of the great moral and spiritual change—they are of those who "cannot please God," and who are at "enmity against God."

III. IN THE INDICATIONS OF ITS ABSENCE.

It is not unlikely that they to whom our Saviour addressed the language of the text, made pretensions to the possession of the "love of God." There are many in the present day who put forth similar pretensions, who are alike destitute of it. Their condition is fearful. O, then, let them attend to those certain indications by which they may arrive at an accurate conception of their state!

1. *An utter disregard of the person and work of the Saviour, is an indication of the absence of the love of God.*

"We love him because he first loved us." But if there be no felt apprehension of his love; if there be no desire for his favour; if there be no sorrow for sin; if there be no faith in his blood, then there can be no love to his person, no regard for his work.

2. *Sensual indulgence, in preference to spiritual enjoyment, is another indication of the absence of the love of God.*

There can be no indulgence of those appetites which are opposed to holiness and purity, and love to God. But there are appetites which are not opposed to holiness, appetites which may to a certain degree be gratified; yet if such gratification be preferred to spiritual enjoyment—be chosen, for instance, in preference to communion with God—then there is no love to God. Take the gratification of imagination as an instance. If a person prefer to gratify this by novel-reading, rather than study the word of God—if this be at any time left, allowed to remain unsearched for, can there be any love to God? We trow not. The love of God is opposed to the "lust of the eye," the desire of fine things, "the lusts of the flesh, and the pride of life."

3. *Inordinate desire of worldly gain is another indication of the absence of the love of God.*

"No man," says our Saviour, "can serve two masters." No one can place the heart's affections on God and on worldly gain. Where the thoughts are more occupied with earth and its concerns, than with God and heaven, there is little of the love of God. "The friendship of the world," the having more intercourse with the men of the world than is absolutely unavoidable—"is enmity against God."

4. *Indifference to the interests of other men, is another indication of the want of the love of God.*

This is applied, by the apostle John, to indifference to the *wants of the poor*. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" It is applied by the same apostle, to a want of a *spirit of kindness to other men*. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" It must be applied also to *unconcern for the salvation of other men*. There can be no question but that he who loves Christ will also love his cause. The language of such a one is, "If I forget thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." This is one of the surest criterions of love to God. If we spend our energies in seeking the salvation of souls—if for this we pray and labour continually—if we receive more joy from the salvation of a soul than from any increase of worldly gain—if we would sacrifice life itself, could that but save a soul from death—then we shall have small occasion to doubt the reality of our love to God. But if all this be wanting—if there be a consulting of our own ease—if there be but a little effort for the salvation of others—then we have no love to God worthy the name.

IV. THE FEARFUL CONSEQUENCES ATTENDANT ON THE WANT OF IT.

They who are destitute of the love of God, are living in an awful state with regard to their spiritual and eternal interests.

1. *Such individuals are under the influence of the most debasing passions of our nature.*

The influence of such a state of things on the mental and spiritual nature, is most lamentable—"earthly, sensual, and devilish," is the awful description recorded respecting them.

2. *They will be eventually excluded from heaven, and shut up in hell.*

Exclusion from heaven—from all its light, love, holy fellowship, hallowed society, and ennobling employments; shut up in hell—in darkness, in blackness of darkness—in the companionship of the lowest, vilest, most degraded, most abominable—with beings with whom you would now scorn to associate—with the murderer—the lover and maker of a lie—the whoremonger—the prostitute—the drunkard—the filthy—with devils!

P.

LXIII.

ACCEPTANCE OF ALL WHO COME UNTO CHRIST.

John vi. 37.—“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

These words were uttered by the Saviour in order to encourage the penitent sinner, and to leave without excuse all who refuse to come. The minister of Christ must therefore imitate his master, and endeavour to persuade all his hearers to come to Christ. Let us then examine:

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY COMING TO CHRIST.

1. *Coming to Christ is an act of the soul by which we freely choose Christ in preference to every thing else.*

An illustration will render this more clear. Supposing that we are occupied with various interesting objects, and while thus engaged behold some dear friend approaching: we immediately lay aside every thing else, and run to meet him. So, when persons come to Christ, their hearts leave the objects with which they had been occupied, fly to him with affectionate desire, and cling to him as the supreme object of their confidence and love. Hence coming to Christ is called elsewhere *trusting in him, receiving him, believing in him, and loving him.*

2. *But in order to come to Christ aright, we must come to him as the only Saviour of sinners.*

We must not come to him merely to gratify our curiosity, or to quiet our consciences, but to be saved by him from sin and its consequences. If therefore we feel our need of Christ, we shall come to him in the office of a prophet, to receive instruction; of a priest, who has made an atoning sacrifice for sin, and intercedes for us in heaven; of a king, who sets up his throne in our hearts, and to whom we yield a free and joyful obedience.

II. CHRIST WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT THOSE WHO THUS COME TO HIM.

The expression *in no wise* is very comprehensive. There is no age, situation, or character to which it may not be applied.

1. *Christ rejects none on account of their age.*

None are excluded because they are too young. It was foretold, that when he came as a shepherd he should gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom; and we read, that he took little children in his arms and blessed them. None are excluded because they are too old: and, if there be peculiar difficulty attending the salvation of the aged, the difficulty is in themselves, not in Christ; since few at the eleventh hour are really willing to come.

2. *Christ rejects none on account of their situation in life.*

Not the poor—for it is to the poor that the gospel is preached; not the despised—for Christ gathers the outcasts of Israel; not

the rich—since, though riches are often an obstacle to a man's coming, they are no obstacles to the reception of those that do come; and all things are possible with God.

3. *Christ rejects none on account of their character.*

No degree of ignorance, and no degree of magnitude in guilt, need keep sinners from coming to Christ. He delights to reveal himself to babes; he is a light to lighten those that sit in darkness, and "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin;" he is "mighty to save," "able to save even to the uttermost all that come unto him by faith."

APPLICATION.

1. Invitation to the young, the aged, the doubting, the afflicted.
2. Refusal to come inexcusable.
3. Inexpressible value of the grace offered, and the price paid to procure it.

P.

LXIV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONSOLATION.

JOHN xvi. 26, 27.—"At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."

Our Saviour was now approaching that sad scene of suffering, ignominy, and death, which was to close his earthly career. All the events which are narrated in the subsequent parts of this narrative were before him; he was about to be placed in circumstances of sorrow and trial, such as no person had ever passed through before. He is now surrounded by his most intimate friends, friends who would in the hour of trial, even before the close of this very night, forsake him, and leave him to his enemies. He is now with them on the way from the upper room, where they had been partaking of the last supper, to the garden of Gethsemane. How interesting to contemplate the Saviour under these circumstances! How does he act under them? Does he hold his disciples in breathless attention while he depicts the scenes of sorrow through which he is about to pass? Oh no! "Sorrow had filled their heart," because he had told them he was going to leave them, and so turning from his own sufferings, he spends his time, the little time that remains, in alleviating their sorrow. How like this is to the usual conduct of Jesus Christ! What an utter disregard of self did he display, when the good of others was concerned!

In the closing verses of this most interesting conversation, he sums up the chief topics which had engaged their attention, and in the language of the text, tells them, that "in that day they should ask in his name."

I. THE DAY HERE CONTEMPLATED.

The term day we understand to represent that period of time which had its commencement in our Lord's resurrection, and will have its termination in his coming to judgment. This period of time has been remarkable for several extraordinary events which have transpired therein, and which are intended to have a practical, and consoling, and saving influence until its close.

1. *One remarkable event by which this day is distinguished, is the accomplishing and acceptance of the atonement.*

In a very early period, even immediately after the fall, there was an intimation of an atonement given in the words, "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." In this, and other predictions of the Old Testament, you will perceive a reference to the contest which is going on betwixt the Sovereign of the universe and one of his creatures who has rebelled against him. In almost every description which the Bible contains on the subject, the atonement is represented as an achievement of power and love, over enemies mighty and malicious. Isaiah lix. 16-19; lxiii. 1-5; lxi. 2; Heb. ii. 14. When Christ entered on his undertaking, when he came to this world to accomplish his purposes of mercy, he was opposed by the prince of darkness—all hell mustered its power and skill to thwart the designs of God. "The prince of this world cometh, but he hath nothing in me." But Satan could not prevail; and when he found that in all his onsets on the Son of God he was beaten back—when he found that all his plans for hindering the atonement were foiled—when he found he could not prevent the atonement, he then invented his grand masterpiece. Finding he could not prevail by force, he thought he should do so by subtlety. He therefore tempted the Jews to crucify him, intending thereby to fix such a mark of ignominy on his death, that he, as their Saviour, would be rejected with disdain. But here also the devil was foiled, and he saw it when it was too late. While Christ was hanging on the cross, Satan appears to have been permitted to see that this cross would be the very means of more effectually accomplishing the purposes of God. With what anguish did he then put it into the hearts of the multitude to cry out, "Come down from the cross!" But our Saviour came not down; he bled on!—groaned on!—died on! until he exclaimed, "It is finished!"

2. *Another remarkable event by which this day is distinguished, is the appearance of Christ in heaven in his mediatorial character.*

In that remarkable prayer which Christ offered just before entering the garden of Gethsemane, as we find it recorded in the seventeenth chapter, he says, "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with that glory which I had with thee before the world was." From this and many other passages, we find that Christ, before he came to our world, had existed in heaven. There he shared the glory of his Father; there he was the object

of ceaseless adoration to angels; there he sat as Jehovah's fellow. But now he is about to appear there in a new character and relation. Having assumed our nature to make an atonement for sin, he did not lay it aside, but rose with it from the power of the grave, and with it ascended to the right hand of God. O what an era was that in the history of heaven! How the angelic host must have thronged its gates to witness his triumphant entrance as God-man? How adoringly they would proclaim his wondrous love!

Christ entered heaven to intercede—

"The dear tokens of his passion
Still his dazzling body bears,
Cause of endless exultation
To his ransom'd worshippers."

He appears before the throne of God as the Advocate of guilty man.

3. *Another remarkable event by which this day is distinguished, is the descent and personal residence of the Holy Spirit in our world.*

The day in which we live is called the ministration of the Spirit. By him the purposes of redeeming love are carried on in the earth, while Christ carries them on in heaven.

II. THE INTIMATION HERE GIVEN.

"Ye shall ask in my name."

1. *A duty imposed.*

Our Saviour here gives us to understand, that however plenteous may be the provisions of his gospel, and however freely dispensed, they are yet only to be had by personal application.

2. *A privilege enjoyed.*

This permits *personal approach*. Under the former dispensation there were prescribed modes of approaching God, some of them expensive in character as well as circuitous; but now all are invited to approach boldly the throne of grace. It includes *freeness of request*. There is the most abundant and varied provision, suited to every possible condition. The fountain is never exhausted; the spring never fails; the streams never run dry. To this source of varied blessing you cannot come too frequently; from this bountiful God you cannot ask too largely. However unworthy you may be to receive, it is not unworthy in God to give.

3. *The manner of approach.*

"In my name."

It is the name of Christ which is our safeguard in approaching God. This name *secures our persons*. Out of Christ, "God is a consuming fire." Christ is the only propitiatory—the only meeting place for God and a sinner. This name *supplies our wants*. It is the key to heaven's richest treasures. No costly sacrifice need be

presented—the name of Christ is sufficient, a name never dishonoured in the court of heaven.

III. THE SECURITY AFFORDED.

Our Saviour, in order to remove any doubts which might linger about the minds of his disciples, proceeds to show what grounds of confidence they had that God would answer their prayers. He bases this,

1. *On his presence before the throne.*

How beautiful is his introduction of this, "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you!" You have no need to be afraid of that. Whenever you approach the Father, I shall be there. Do not forget this; and do not think that I can or will forget you. Yet many of Christ's people frequently think that, in his present state of exaltation, the Saviour forgets them. But it is not so. Although the Saviour is surrounded with all the splendours of a throne, and although his ears are filled with the melody of heaven, yet he forgets not the agony of Gethsemane, nor the suffering of Calvary. And even were he disposed to forget, he could not, for the land of glory is filled with the fragrance of his sacrifice, and the robes of the redeemed are stained with his blood.

2. *On the love of the Father.*

God loves the world, and from this love has proceeded the gifts of his Son and his Spirit. But this is the love of compassion only,—that in the text is the love of complacency. It includes a love of *approval*. They who are the objects of it, were once ranged in the ranks of his enemies; but they have laid down the weapons of their rebellion, to receive mercy on God's own terms. It is a love of *delight*. They were once alienated from him, enemies by nature and wicked works; but now they are partakers of the divine nature—they bear his image.

"Saints are lovely in his sight,
He views his children with delight,
He sees their hope, he knows their fear,
He looks and loves his image there."

But why does God thus love you? "Because ye have loved me;" not by nature—not during the greater part of your life—but ye have been changed by my Spirit; so that God is represented as loving you for that which he himself has produced.

Learn never to give way to *despondency*. You are always the objects of your Father's love; that, like him, is unchangeable. Learn to ask largely from God—never bow your knees before him without bringing a special request, and never retire from before him without taking away a special blessing. But I speak not to you all; ye are of the world, and cannot have the love of God in you? O be wise in time, and seek his mercy and his love!

G.

LXV.

THE DANGER OF INDECISION.

JOHN xix. 19, 20—"And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews. This title then read many of the Jews."

At first view there may appear nothing extraordinary in this statement; it may appear to have been merely Pilate's intention to distinguish the person of the illustrious sufferer, for the benefit of the stranger Jews with which Jerusalem was now filled. But a little closer inspection will convince us that there is more in this statement than at first sight meets the eye.

I. THE FACT RECORDED.

"Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross."

Look at this,

1. *As it stands connected with the state of Pilate's mind.*

In the earlier stages of these proceedings Pilate appears to have been in a state bordering on conviction, that his prisoner was a Divine being. Nor are we to be astonished at finding a Roman governor with such feelings; for we must remember that the expectation of the Messiah at this very time, pervaded all nations. That he would be a Divine person; that he would spring out of Judea; that he would assume the title, King of the Jews; and that he would found a kingdom which would subvert all others. The general prevalency of this is to be attributed partly to the scattering of the Jews; partly to the Septuagint translation of the Pentateuch; partly to the study which some of the Grecian philosophers had bestowed on the sacred books. Now with this subject we must suppose Pilate to have some acquaintance, especially as he was the governor of the very province in which the expected deliverer was to appear. When therefore a prisoner was placed before him on a charge of assuming the very title of this expected personage, coupled, as we may well suppose it to have been, with some knowledge of the Saviour's fame, are we to be surprised that he should have been somewhat convinced of the truth of his claims? A careful consideration of two or three particulars will, if we mistake not, shut us up to this conclusion.

(1.) *Pilate's conduct was so unlike his usual mode of acting.*

The character of Pilate, as it has come down to us, is that of a tyrannical governor; one who never respected the means in securing his end. He had deluged Jerusalem, and in fact the whole province, with blood; putting to death in mere sport. So great were his exactions, and so excessive his cruelty, that the Jews were frequently on the eve of revolt, or of complaint to the emperor. Yet in the case of a defenceless individual, he hesitates; hesitates, notwithstanding his own craving for blood; hesitates, when by yielding he may obliterate a considerable portion of the

bad feeling which existed against him; hesitates, when he may secure popularity! Now, how can we account for this hesitancy and wavering, but on the supposition of his being convinced of the real character of his prisoner? This conclusion is almost irresistible when we consider,

(2.) *The remarkable signs of fear which he exhibited, together with other remarkable features in his conduct.*

In reading over the various narratives of these transactions, we cannot but be struck with the earnestness with which Pilate labours to release Christ. He reasons with the people, "why, what evil hath he done?" Then look at his attempts to shift the burden from himself, first in sending him to Herod; next, in placing him in contrast with a notorious malefactor; and finally in that farcical conscience-salver, the washing his hands of the blood. These are the doings of a man who is under the influence of fear.

2. *Look at the remarkable revolution in Pilate's mind and actions.*

The struggle in the mind of Pilate was reaching its critical point when he gave Christ up to be scourged. We are not disposed to take the common view of that transaction, that Pilate commanded it in order to awaken emotions of pity in the breasts of the Jews. Pilate was too good a judge of human nature for that. It appears to us that Pilate caused our Lord to be scourged, in order to satisfy his mind whether he were a Divine person, expecting that if he were really the King of the Jews there would be a remarkable interposition of Providence in his behalf. Yet even after this Pilate made efforts to release him, plainly showing that his doubts were not yet satisfied. Circumstances occurred just now to bring the struggle to a point. Pilate having told the Jews to take him and crucify him, they retort, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." This was a new feature in the case; it roused all Pilate's fears; and just then a messenger arrived from his wife, exhorting him to have nothing to do with that just man. Inclined to follow the advice, he is going to do so, when the chief Priests, witnessing his intention, exclaim, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." Alas! for Pilate, this senseless clamour prevailed, and he gave orders that he should be crucified. Pilate's downward course was now awfully rapid. He brought out Jesus, and pointing to him in derision, exclaimed, "Behold your King!" With similar feelings predominant he affixed the title to the cross; holding up Jesus and his pretensions to scorn, mocking and deriding the expectations of the Jews, giving way to downright scepticism and atheism. Looking at the conduct of Pilate in this light, we are obliged to add him to the list of those who, having been the subjects of spiritual awakenings and salutary religious fear, have outlived their convictions, drowned the voice of conscience, and grieved and quenched

the Holy Spirit, and have eventually become so hardened as to make mockery of sacred things.

But though such were the feelings of Pilate in affixing this title, yet as it was permitted by Divine Providence, we must regard it as having been permitted for gracious and important purposes.

II. THE SCOPE OF THIS TITLE.

In this inscription there is a distinct recognition of the claims which Christ had put forth. The title Jesus was given to him at his birth. In his intercourse with the Jews he distinctly claimed the character which the name implies. One great truth on which he delighted to dwell was, that he came to seek and to save that which was lost. Jesus of Nazareth was a name which gave life to the dead; eyes to the blind; health to the sick.

III. NOTICE SOME OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THIS TITLE.

1. *It was affixed to the cross.*

The death to which he was adjudged in scorn. The cross, which would be always urged against his claims, but which would be made subservient to the promotion of his cause and kingdom.

2. *It was affixed at the very time when he was making an atonement for sin, and thus qualifying himself for Saviour and King.*

He was now suffering the penalty of human transgression. He was now engaged in that contest with Satan, by which the kingdom of darkness was to be overthrown, and the kingdom of light and life fully established.

Learn from this subject.

1. *Not to trifle with religious impressions.*

Take a leaf out of Pilate's history, and learn from it the danger of not following the motions of the Holy Spirit. You are now perhaps awakened by the Spirit; you are probably acting as Pilate did; O be assured that, if you persist, you, like Pilate, will be left to the hardness of your hearts!

2. *Submit at once to Christ as your Saviour and King.*

He is still Jesus. O come to him to be saved! He is still the King of the Jews; and if you would have him for your Saviour, you must obey the laws of his kingdom.

G.

LXVI.

THE ASCENSION.

ACTS i. 9-11.—“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

This is one of the most important and interesting facts which has been preserved respecting the Saviour.

Consider,

I. SOME OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED THEREWITH.

The object of Christ's humiliation being accomplished, that which had been predicted respecting his glorious exaltation was now to take place. They who had been his companions in his lowly condition, were chosen to witness his ascension to glory. He led them out as far as Bethany, that he might converse with them on the way, and that his parting from them might be better witnessed by them. He was parted from them while he was in the act of teaching them. He parted from them that he might ascend to heaven.

II. THE IMPORTANT PURPOSES ACCOMPLISHED BY THE ASCENSION.

1. *It was the fulfilment of ancient prophecies.* Psalm cx. 1; Psalm lxxviii. 18.
2. *It shows that the atonement was acceptable to God.*
3. *It opened the way for the gift of the Holy Spirit.* John xvi. 7; Acts ii. 1-4.
4. *It was necessary for the purposes of intercession.* Hebrews iv. 14; vii. 25-27; Romans viii. 33-34.
5. *He ascended to promote and accomplish the triumphs of his mediatorial kingdom.* Psalm ii. 6; Isaiah ix. 6-7.

III. THE FINAL CONSUMMATION.

“This same Jesus shall so come in like manner,”

1. *To close the administration of providence.*
2. *To take vengeance on his foes.*
3. *To gather his people to their eternal home.*

P.

LXVII.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

ACTS II. 23.—“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

This verse forms part of the first sermon of Peter the apostle, a sermon remarkable for its faithfulness—for the power of the Holy Spirit which accompanied it—and for the results accomplished by it.

I. THE STATEMENT MADE.

“Him, being delivered, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

Jesus of Nazareth was delivered to death, to a death most extraordinary in its nature, and the most dolorous in its circumstances; for consider,

1. *The place where he died.*

We all hope to die at our homes—but Jesus was led out to Calvary—a place putrid with blood and bones, and there they crucified him.

2. *The persons amongst whom he died.*

He was crucified between two thieves, whom their fellows would not permit to live because of their enormities. He was thus classed with sinners of the vilest character.

3. *The death itself.*

It was crucifixion; the most lingering, and the most painful mode of death, and it was the most infamous one. In the estimation of the Jews, it was an accursed death, for, according to their own law, “cursed was he that hangeth on a tree.”

II. THE AGENTS EMPLOYED.

1. *Human agency was permitted.*

Permitted, for in one sense the death of Christ was eminently voluntary: “No man taketh my life from me; I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again.” But human agency was permitted: “Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” It was the Jews that did it. Their High Priest said it was expedient for him to die; their Pontius Pilate condemned him; their Judas betrayed him; their Herod mocked him; their priests plotted his death; their Scribes and Pharisees rejoiced in it; their populace shouted for it. This agency was not at all necessary;* the death of Christ could and would have been brought about, had they never interfered. Thus their guilt was inexcusable, since their actions were not by the determinate counsel of Jehovah.

2. *Divine agency was in this transaction.*

* See Goodwin’s “Redemption Redeemed,” on this topic.

A God appears in this amazing scene. Lift up your eyes to the throne of the majesty on high, and listen to the voice which proceeds therefrom: "Awake, O sword, against the Man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." The death of Christ was not casual, it was not accidental; it was according to the certain counsels entered into between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the abyss of a past eternity. "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."

III. THE END SECURED.

He was delivered up for what? for whom?

Not for his own iniquity, for he had none. Not for himself, for he was no transgressor. He was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." His death furnishes the means of our life; for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

B—T.

LXVIII.

GOSPEL BLESSINGS.

ACTS iii. 26.—"Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, by turning every one of you from his iniquities."

The text forms the concluding paragraph of the sermon which Peter delivered on the occasion of healing the lame man. At an early hour he and John repaired to the temple, for the purpose of prayer; as they approached, they beheld a man, lame from his birth, laid at the gate Beautiful. On this man a miracle was effected. The consequence of which was, that a large concourse of people gathered round the two apostles, wondering at that which had taken place. Peter seized hold of the occasion, to discharge his duty as an apostle, and preached unto them Jesus.

I. THE FACT STATED.

"God raised up his Son Jesus."

The title Son here given to Christ, evidently describes the relationship in nature betwixt the first and second person of the adorable Trinity. The great truth of the text is, that the whole mediatorial work of Christ was by the appointment, with the sanction, and had the approval, of the Father.

1. *The scheme of redemption originated in the Divine counsels.*

This glorious scheme was not an after-thought, forced upon God by the circumstances in which human transgression had placed him. He who sees the end from the beginning, saw the transgression of man and the consequences it entailed, and before his

creation made provision for his redemption. Psalm xl. 6, 7. Some people understand the scriptures to say, that Christ came to procure the love of God—but the language of our text and of many other passages is, that Christ was “raised up,” as a special manifestation of the love of God. John iii. 16; v. 8.

2. *The death of Christ was by Divine appointment.*

Not perhaps the mode of it—that was permitted. His death appears, and only appears, to have been the result of human agency. Human power could not have caused his death. His death required a putting forth of Omnipotence; for what but almighty power could produce death in the God-man? “He was delivered up by the determinate counsel of God.” Is the death of Christ considered as sacrificial? He is the “Lamb of God;” the “lamb” of God’s choosing; the “lamb” of God’s providing. Gen. xxii. 8. Is the death of Christ considered as necessary? “It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Heb. ii. 10. Is the death of Christ considered as substitutionary? “He hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.” “It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when *thou shalt* make his soul an offering for sin.” Isaiah liii. 6, 10.

3. *The death of Christ was accepted by the Father.*

That the atonement was acceptable and accepted is shown by the resurrection. “He was delivered for our offences, and was raised for our *justification*.” “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain.” “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” 1 Cor. xv. 14-17. The exaltation of Christ, apart from the peculiar character he sustains in it, is another mark of his Father’s approval. “Therefore God hath highly exalted him.” “When he had by himself purged our sins, *sat down on the right hand* of the majesty-on high.”

II. THE OBJECT CONTEMPLATED.

“That he might turn away every one of you from his iniquity.”

The message of the angel announcing his birth to Mary, was, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” This was the chief design of his being “raised up;” whatever other objects may be accomplished thereby, this was the great end. Every thing he said and did was in entire subservience to this. The whole mediatorial work of Christ has reference to this; to destroy sin, to destroy the works of the devil.

This object is accomplished by the power of moral suasion; there is no compulsion—every one is “turned away from his iniquity” willingly. Not that man can turn away of himself or turn away when he pleases; he owes the power and the will to the Holy Spirit of God, who enlightens, awakens, and convicts of sin; and when these motions are yielded to, and the individuals who are their subjects become penitent, he enables them

to believe; while in the act of believing he changes their nature, turns them away from the guilt, penalty, and practice of iniquity, and enables them to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

III. THE BLESSEDNESS CONNECTED WITH THIS.

"Sent him to *bless* you, in turning every one of you from his iniquity."

True happiness is only to be found in salvation from sin. Any man who is under either the guilt or the power of sin is unhappy. Sin has produced all the misery in the world. Its steps are attended with disappointment, vexation, remorse, and every unhallowed and miserable feeling. Besides this, sin has brought on us the curse of God. It produces misery, and exposes to misery. How happy, then—thrice happy—is "the man whose sin is pardoned," so that he fears nothing from the displeasure of God; "whose sin is covered," so that he is no longer under its withering, blighting, blasting power. Such a one is happy in the favour of God; happy in the witness of adoption; happy in the possession of a holy nature; happy in the hope to which he is begotten, of "an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

IV. THE REASON FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE JEW FIRST.

1. *As a demonstration of its truth.*

How suspicious a circumstance it would have been had Christ sent his disciples far away from Judea to preach his gospel! How eagerly it would have been seized upon by his enemies, who opposed his claims and disbelieved his mission! Christianity has had opponents in all ages, and under such circumstances how gladly would these have urged, "If all these things did occur, why not have given an opportunity for their truth to be tested, by preaching to the very people who are said to be witnesses of these things?" And so they did. The apostles were enjoined to commence their mission in the very streets where the facts occurred, and they did so within six weeks after some of the facts had transpired.

2. *As a demonstration of its mercy.*

When a sinner is thoroughly sensible of his undone condition, his predominant feeling is despair. And how is the messenger of mercy to deal with such a feeling? Why, Christ has furnished him with the means of meeting and removing it. "Go," he said to his apostles, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." For "thus it behoved Christ to suffer," that "repentance and remission of sins might be preached in his name," *commencing* "at Jerusalem." "Go," as though he had said, "to the scene of so many miracles; to the city whose stones are stained with the blood of my servants the prophets; to the city whose inhabitants have filled up the measure of their iniquities by their clamour for my blood; go to this city, and after you have gathered my murderers together, after singling out them who crowned

me with thorns, who scourged me, who nailed me to the cross;—offer my mercy to *them*, and then go into all the world, and wherever you find a sinner despairing of mercy, tell him that, having offered mercy to my murderers, he need not despair.”—G.

LXIX.

STEPHEN'S CHARACTER AND DEATH.

ACTS vii. 55 60.—“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,” &c. &c.

It is a remarkable feature in the death of the first martyr, that he was stoned for maintaining that he saw the Son of man “standing on the right hand of God.” When we read this, our mind naturally reverts to that scene in which our Saviour, undergoing a kind of mock trial, is asked by the High Priest to tell plainly whether he is the Messiah or not. Our Saviour replies, “Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power. Then the High Priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy, what further need have we of witnesses?” Matthew xxvi. 64, 65. So that Stephen was stoned for maintaining the truth of those claims, which constituted the charge on which Christ himself was put to death.

I. HIS CHARACTER AND ACTION.

“He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven.”

There was great prominence given in the early history of the church to the doctrine of the Spirit. The promise and bestowal of the Spirit was considered as the great boon of the Son of God. The gift of the Spirit was the pledge of his affection—the earnest of the future inheritance. To the Spirit belongs the entire work of bringing men to Christ; but in the text it is the indwelling of the Spirit to which reference is made. “Full of the Holy Ghost.” This expression does not describe a state peculiar to Stephen; for this is the privilege of every believer. That the Holy Spirit shall dwell in the heart of the believer is matter of special promise. In the case of Stephen and the New Testament saints, the promised blessing was delightfully realized. Blessed be God! there are some amongst us now who enjoy the Spirit's presence; but, alas! we are content with a lower degree than were the early saints. Look at Stephen and at Barnabas—they were *full* of the Holy Ghost. They were not content with a small measure of the Spirit. They lived to the full extent of their privilege. The Holy Spirit is given by Christ, and leads to Christ. Thus Stephen

"looked up stedfastly into heaven." He "looked up," for he had fixed his hope there. His anchor Christ was within the veil. Whatever were his trials on earth—whatever the power or the nature of his enemies, he knew in whom he had believed. "He looked up" *with longing desire*. The effect of being full of the Holy Ghost is to long for the presence of Christ. But Stephen had peculiar discoveries made to him of the heavenly inheritance, that he could not help but gaze, and long, as he gazed, to be gone. He wanted—he longed,

"To cast his crown before him,
Fill'd with wonder, love, and praise."

II. HIS VISION AND TESTIMONY.

1. *His vision.*

"He saw the glory of God."

Not as Isaiah saw it when it filled the temple; not as Ezekiel saw it by the river of Chebar; nor as it appeared to the people of Israel in the wilderness; nor yet as it was seen by Moses on the mount; but as it appears in heaven, as it appears to angels. He saw the glory of God as angels see it, when they veil their faces beneath their wings. *He saw Jesus*, and knew who he was; for mark, Jesus is a man, and Jesus as a man is in heaven. Stephen saw Jesus in heaven. There were glittering hosts there, there were bright thrones there, but he was most distinct from them all. Stephen had an eye for none but him. He saw *him at the right hand of God*. Yes, Christ is exalted. Yes, he who was the object of scorn; he who was humbled; he who was a few days before on the cross, is seen now at the right hand of God. And *look at his position*. *He is standing*. The scriptures usually represent that he sat down at the right hand of God, but now he is standing. He is so interested in the case of his servant, that he can sit no longer; he stands to watch the proceedings; stands to receive the spirit of his martyred servant.

2. *His testimony.*

"*I see the heavens opened.*" Hitherto they had been closed by sin; but now the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," hath prevailed to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. When Christ ascended from earth to his throne in glory, the attendant angels sung, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; ye everlasting doors give way." The testimony of Stephen is to the fact that Christ is the King of glory. It went further than this; it was an expression of faith in the great Mediator, and it was given in the prospect of death.

III. HIS CLOSING ACT AND FINAL PRAYER.

"He knelt down." Thus showing that he was perfectly collected. This act also intimates the position in which prayer should be offered.

He prayed to Christ. Hence the divinity of the Saviour.

He supplicates mercy for his murderers, thus imitating the Saviour. He asks Christ to receive his spirit.

G.

LXX.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

ACTS xiii. 32, 33.—“We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again.”

The gospel is emphatically glad tidings; it tells us of a Saviour; it informs us of deliverance; it provides for us inestimable blessings. Our text applies the term glad tidings to the resurrection, and at the same time states that the resurrection was the subject of promise to the fathers. Every promise of the coming of Christ implied the further promise of his resurrection.

I. CHRIST AND HIS RESURRECTION WERE PROMISED TO THE FATHERS.

There was a promise to Adam, Gen. iii. 15. There were the promises to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3; Gen. xxii. 1-14, compare with Heb. xi. 19. It was made to David, Psalm ii. 7; Psalm xvi. 10. We find this promise in types, ceremonies, and historical events; we find it in the descriptions of prophecy; we find it in the narrative of Jonah; in a word, we find it interwoven into the whole of the Old Testament.

II. THIS PROMISE IS NOW FULFILLED.

The fact of the resurrection is more fully established than any other event of history. The sealing of the sepulchre and the setting a watch of Roman soldiers, the rolling away of the stone, the device of the priests to throw discredit on the testimony of the disciples, the bribing of the Roman soldiers, and all the other events related by the Evangelists, prove, incontrovertibly, the reality of the resurrection.

III. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST GLAD TIDINGS.

1. *In consequence of it the gospel is preached.*

“Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name.” “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain.”

2. *It shows that the justice of God is satisfied, and sin expiated.*

The death of Christ was a sacrifice to Divine justice for the sins of men; his resurrection from the power of death is God's testimony, that the full penalty was endured. If it had not been, Christ must have remained under the power of death.

3. *It prepared the way for our High Priest to engage in the employment of intercession.*

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

4. *Connected with the resurrection of Christ is the possession and exercise of Christian hope.*

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead."

M.

LXXI.

REPENTANCE.

ACTS xvii. 30, 31.—"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained."

The apostle, after an exceedingly fine introduction, in the first sentence of our text, meets an objection which might possibly be urged against the doctrine of God's regard for man, which he was about to preach, an objection drawn from abounding iniquity. Who has not been tempted to think with the votaries of some of those sects by whom the apostle was now surrounded, when they have witnessed the state of the world, that God does not care for any thing that takes place on earth? The apostle asserts that God "winked at" the times of ignorance. This expression receives some light from the third chapter of Romans, twenty-fifth verse—"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of *sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*" God winked at, or bore with, the times of ignorance, because of his design that his Son should be a propitiation. But now, taking his stand at the cross of Christ, he calleth on men every where to repent.

I. THE DUTY COMMANDED.

Repentance is a term of frequent occurrence in the Bible; great stress is laid upon the due performance of it. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Rightly to understand its meaning, therefore, is a thing of great importance, especially as its general acceptation is much below its scriptural import. It is commonly used to signify regret; but in the duty enjoined in the Bible, it is of much more extended meaning. It embraces an entire change of mind and conduct. Wherever there is true repentance, there is,

1. *A sense of utter worthlessness.*

This arises from the feeling of guilt, from a deep consciousness of awful pollution and depravity. Thus felt Job when he exclaimed, "Lord, I am vile, how shall I answer thee?" Thus felt Isaiah, when, falling on his face before God, he exclaimed, "Woe is me, for I am undone." Thus felt Peter when he fell down at the Saviour's feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Thus felt Paul, when describing his state during those three days which intervened between the Lord's appearing to him on the way, and his appearing to pardon; hear him, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" And thus must you feel, if you would ever get a knowledge of salvation, in the remission of your sins.

2. *Bitter sorrow for sin.*

Every true penitent has true sorrow. When the prophet describes the effects which flow from the outpouring of the Spirit, he says, "they shall mourn as one mourneth for his only son." When Peter caught the eye of his Lord, "he went out and wept bitterly;" when the Psalmist describes the pangs of repentance, he says, "the pains of hell gat hold of me." When Paul was arrested on his way to Damascus, "he neither eat nor drank for three days and three nights," so great was his distress of mind. When the jailer was awakened by the Holy Spirit, he sprang in, and came trembling, crying in an agony, "What must I do to be saved?" *So must you feel.* You must have intense sorrow for having grieved Christ. There is no repentance worth the name in which this is not the predominant, all-pervading feeling.

3. *Confession and forsaking of sin.*

Every true penitent comes sooner or later to God confessing his sin, and supplicating for pardon. Confession of sin to God is your duty, but it must also be joined to an entire abandonment of all iniquity. An indulgence in one sin, however trifling it may appear, is fatal to the character of your repentance. No one, under the influence of godly sorrow, can consider any sin as trifling; it is the abominable thing which God hateth—and therefore the penitent hates it.

II. THE PECULIAR OBLIGATIONS UNDER WHICH MEN ARE NOW LAID TO PERFORM THIS DUTY.

"God now commandeth all men every where to repent."

1. *Because of the atonement made for sin by Jesus Christ.*

Repentance is of no avail in itself for salvation; it draws all its value from the death of Christ. Repentance does not save, it only shows the need of a Saviour. It never could have been enjoined on man as necessary to salvation, had not Christ died. The cross is the only place in the universe from whence this command can come forth. Repentance is connected with the death of Christ. The reasons which were urged by our Lord and by his disciples, all suppose this; "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven

is at hand." Thus it behoved Christ to suffer—"that repentance might be preached in his name." Men are laid, then, under peculiar obligations to repent, because Christ died for sin. Shall he show his abhorrence of sin by the death of his Son, and will you not show yours by repenting thereof? Shall he do much for sin to be put away, and will you do nothing? What! has Christ died that your sins may be pardoned, and will you not forsake and be sorry for them? Will you tell God, by still living in sin, that you neither care for him, or his love, or the death of his Son?

2. *Because of the work of the Spirit.*

Repentance is not a flower of nature's garden. It is not a thing which a man may produce when he pleases. It will not come at the bidding of any man. You may think differently. You may fancy that you can repent when you please; but you cannot. The tear of contrition will not start at *your* bidding; the gush of godly sorrow will not thrill your bosom *whenever you* wish it to do so. Even had you the power to repent, you have not the will. O how distasteful! how unpleasant a thing! is repentance to you—yet you think you can repent when you please. Men can only repent, when moved and enabled to do so by the Holy Spirit. The death of Christ has opened the way for God to give us the Spirit. It has not given to us a right to the Holy Spirit. God has promised to give us the Spirit, but he has not promised how long or how often the Holy Spirit shall strive, or in other ways influence men. Hence the obligation to repent now that you hear the command. O that you would consider this! O that you would open your heart to the full strength of this consideration. But, alas, the majority of you will go on in the carnal security of your opinion, that you can repent when you please, and will not be waked up from your delusion till you open your eyes in hell. How true is the scriptural representation of your condition! According to this, your state is one of great peril joined to ignorance of the fact. A blind man walking on the edge of a precipice could not be in greater danger than you are. The path you are treading is full of pits and gins, down which, one here, and another there, is tumbling into the bottomless pit—you are going along this path heedlessly; beware! The Holy Spirit is doing for you now, that which would be done for a blind man, in the case supposed, were his eyes to be suddenly opened; his condition would be discovered, while it would rest with himself to escape—so it is with you. The Holy Spirit is awakening you and trying to save you, and it rests with you whether or not you will be saved. The Spirit is doing that for you which the angel did for Lot. He shows you your danger, he warns you to flee, he takes you by the hand, and, pointing to the only means of safety, tells you to escape for your life.

III. THE ARGUMENT EMPLOYED BY THE APOSTLE WHY MEN SHOULD REPENT.

"Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness."

The fact of the judgment is unquestionable. No truth is surrounded with such a body of evidence in its support. Men ought to repent now, because,

1. *Of the disclosures of that day.*

Some men are kept now from compliance with this duty by shame and pride. If they repent they will have publicly to change sides. They will have to confess their sins to God, and this many men will not do. Other men do not repent, because they have injured others either in person, character, or property. They have spoken that which is not true; they have defamed character; they have been the seducers of virtue; they have been the undoers of the unfortunate, or they have defrauded in business, or in other ways possessed themselves of the property of others, and before they can be pardoned, *they must make restitution*;* they must do what they can to repair the injury they have done, and unless they do so, there is no mercy for them. Now many men do not repent because of these requirements; but of what avail will their silence be to them? At the judgment, *all* their actions will be disclosed; for every thought, feeling, word, and work, will they have to give account. A disclosure must be made either now or then; only with this difference, that now it will be made to few, but then before the world; now forgiveness may be had, but then there will have to be confession, and you will be turned into hell after all. Men ought to repent now, because,

2. *Of the decisions of that day.*

Repent now, and you will obtain a change of state and of nature. But the decisions of that day will be unalterable. The *state* in which that day finds you, will be that in which it will fix you for ever. Your character is forming now, your habits and destiny will be fixed then. Repent while your repentance will do you good.

IV. LOOK AT THE MOTIVES WHICH OUGHT TO INFLUENCE YOU.

God commands you to repent. He against whom you have sinned requires you to repent. Then if you do he will save you. Does God command you to repent? Then with the command he gives the power to repent. Does God command you to repent? Has he often commanded you to repent? Then repent, lest his wrath should awaken, and he should appoint you your portion with the fearful and the unbelieving in the lake of fire and brimstone.—G.

* Perhaps the following instance, connected with the delivery of the sermon, an outline of which is given above, may be of service in stirring up others to insist on this doctrine. The sermon was delivered on May 11th, 1845, in ———, Cheshire. At the close of a prayer meeting, which was held immediately after the sermon, a young man who had been some time in distress for his soul, stopped Mr. ———, and told him that some time before he had cheated him of five shillings; that the remarks on restitution in the sermon had so impressed his mind, that he could not look for mercy until he had confessed the wrong.

LXXII.

IMPENTENCE.

ROMANS II. 5.—“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

Ye who are living under the influence of impenitence, read here your character and doom. How thrilling ought your emotions to be, when you read that you are laying up—not treasures of happiness and joy—but of woe, of bitter, unutterable woe.

Consider,

I. IMPENTENCE IN ITS NATURE.

Impenitence is a hardened rejection of God's mercy in Christ. A person under its influence is not convinced of his guilty and depraved condition, does not mourn over sin, does not feel his need of mercy. In some this impenitence is total. They have so often rejected the overtures of divine mercy, that now they are given up to be filled with the fruit of their own devices. In others it is partial. They have occasional awakenings, something like sorrow for sin, designs of amendment; but these are not of long continuance, while they leave their subjects more hardened at each successive visitation.

II. IMPENTENCE IN ITS CONSEQUENCES.

“Wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

1. *The period of its infliction: “the day of wrath.”*

At the very moment we die we enter either heaven or hell. Death is the most awful catastrophe that can happen to us in this world; but it is as nothing compared with what is to follow. The reference in the text is to the day of judgment, which to the wicked will be nothing but a day of wrath. All they see, all they hear, all they feel, will be unmixed wrath. The day of wrath is also said to be “a day of revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” There will be a revelation of God in his justice as well as in his mercy; of Jesus Christ as a judge as well as a Saviour; of man whether he be wicked or righteous. It will be a revelation of *righteous* judgment. The decisions of that day will be unquestioned. No impeachment of justice, no charge of partiality; it will be righteous judgment.

2. *The nature of the punishment.*

It is called “wrath.” It is the wrath of God; of omnipotence. Wrath unmitigated—unsweetened—with one drop of mercy. Wrath that will be felt; wrath on the body; wrath on the soul. *It will be everlasting.* The fire said to be unquenchable; “the worm that dieth not.” For ever. It is now “wrath to come,”

and because it is *to come*, sinners will not believe it; because it is *to come*, they think it never will come.

3. *The proportion of the punishment.*

"Treasurest up wrath." Heaps of wrath. And you will observe the sinner is represented as the author of his own punishment. The idea conveyed is this, that there is an accumulation continually going on as long as he sins. Whatever an impenitent man is doing, he is "heaping up wrath." Every day he is adding something to the heap.

J.

LXXIII.

JUSTIFICATION.

ROMANS iii. 24.—"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Rightly to understand the doctrine of justification is a matter of great importance. It holds a very prominent place in the inspired volume. It is connected with the most momentous concerns of men.

Consider,

I. OUR NEED OF THIS BLESSING.

This arises from the sinfulness of our race, our total want of righteousness, our actual transgression of the law of God. The whole world are sinners. All are under sin; as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one; "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

II. THE NATURE OF THIS BLESSING.

It consists in being accounted just before God. It is pardon for all past sin. It is acquittal from condemnation; "there is now therefore no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

III. THE MEANS BY WHICH WE OBTAIN THIS BLESSING.

"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The term redemption denotes a price paid for the deliverance of captives. In the same sense our Saviour tells us that he "came to give his life a ransom for many;" and the apostle Peter, "that we were redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ;" and again we are told that God "purchased the church with his own blood;" all of these passages convey the same meaning with our text, "that our justification was obtained by the blood-shedding of the Lamb of God."

B.

LXXIV.

JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE.

ROMANS III. 24.—“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

The Holy Scriptures teach that the eternal wellbeing of man depends on his present conduct; they also teach that the conduct of man has been such as to expose him to justly merited misery. No question, then, can be of so much importance to us as that which propounds a method of escape from the misery with which we are threatened.

I. THE NATURE OF THE STATE SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT.

“Being justified.”

Justification is a term used in our courts of law in the sense of acquittal. If the charge against a prisoner cannot be proven, or if there be positive evidence of his innocence, he is acquitted, he is set free; the law does not detain, and dare not punish him, it says, “go free.”

The gospel blessing is somewhat analogous to this, though differing essentially in some important particulars.

Notice,

1. *Some circumstances in their previous condition.*(1.) *A charge to have been made.*

A charge is preferred against all men of having wilfully, knowingly, and willingly acted in opposition to the Divine law; of having offended the majesty of heaven; of being engaged in rebellion against his authority and government; of audaciously refusing to obey him; and openly acting in defiance of his command.

(2.) *The charge is proved.*

There is a peculiarity belonging to human beings on this subject, which must not be overlooked; all men every where *feel* themselves to be sinners. However different in other respects, here they are alike. Men are of diversified conditions, they belong to different climes, they speak different languages, they differ one from another in the height of their stature, and in the colour of their skin, and in their personal and mental endowments—but on this point they feel that they agree; each man feels himself a sinner; “all the world is guilty before God.”

(3.) *The sentence of death is recorded.*

“Thou shalt surely die;” it is written in every sinner’s heart. The decree has gone forth to all the world, that sin shall be punished with death. Every sinner carries the sentence about him continually.

2. *The change that takes place in the sinner’s state when he is justified.*

It is evident that justification is not a declaration of innocence, nor is it an acquittal for want of evidence; it is simply an acquittal from *all the consequences of sin*. It is the opposite of condemnation; it is a repeal of the penalty; it is the removal of punishment; it is rescinding the sentence of death; in a word, it is pardon. Pardon for all sin, and this comprehends,

(1.) *Deliverance from the penalty.*

The ungodly who are justified, are delivered thereby from the wrath of God; they are no longer exposed to it, no longer under the curse of his law.

(2.) *An assurance of God's favour.*

The penitent sinner who believes in Jesus, is received into the favour and family of God. He has the witness of the Holy Spirit, assuring him of restoration to the favour of God.

(3.) *Title to everlasting life.*

Justification is the opposite of condemnation. The condemnation is eternal death: justification therefore secures eternal life. He who is now released from the penalty is assured that at the last day, if he continue steadfast in the faith to the end, he will be pronounced pardoned, and put in possession of eternal life. Thus justification is deliverance from all the penal consequences of transgression; the *one* act of God delivers from the penalty of a whole life of transgression. Now a very important question presents itself. If penal consequences are attached to the commission of sin, how is it that it can be forgiven? What is the consideration for the sake of which the penalty is cancelled? This leads us to notice,

II. JUSTIFICATION IN ITS SOURCE.

The justification of a sinner must have its origin in the grace of God. That man deserves any thing but the favour of God, we have already seen. Neither is he in circumstances to regain the favour of God by any thing which he can do. Continual uniform obedience will not do it, for this he still owes to God, and present or future obedience will not atone for past transgression. Sacrifices, however costly, will not do it; for what has he that he has not received? No! the grace of God alone is the source of justification. This grace is illustrated in the text.

1. *In the means by which justification is procured,*

"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The Scriptures teach us, that however willing God might be to pardon man, yet it could not be, unless the honour of his government be upheld, and the authority of his law vindicated; this could only be by exacting all the claims of Divine justice of one who was every way qualified to be the sinner's substitute. Our text informs us that this was the mode adopted, and other passages of scripture uniformly represent the salvation of man to be connected with the death of Christ; they also teach that his death was necessary; and they also assert that it was

substitutionary. If this be the case, how great is the grace of God! In what way could he have made a more illustrious display? "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."

The grace of God is also illustrated in the text,

2. *By the manner in which justification is bestowed.*

"Being justified freely."

(1.) *He has no respect to previous character.*

He makes no selection from the mass of mankind. Those who may be distinguished for probity, integrity, honesty, virtuous conduct, or kindly dispositions, are on the footing with God as the most abandoned characters. He justifies the ungodly. In his sight all are sinners. A Saul of Tarsus is as welcome as one whose life is stained with no crime; a backsliding Peter as soon as the loved disciple John; the guilty publican before the proud pharisee.

(2.) *He has respect to present character.*

Although God is willing to pardon the vilest, yet there must be personal application and a compliance with certain conditions.

The ungodly must be penitent, or there is no justification. But here is a difficulty. There are two obstacles to man's justification; one in his guilt, the other in his depravity. The death of Christ atones for the one, and makes provision for the removal of the other. Were it not so, man would not, man could not, repent of his sin, and make personal application for pardon. God has bestowed two great gifts on the world, his Son and his Spirit. His Son has opened the way for the exercise of his mercy; his Spirit enables and induces man to apply for it. Thus the grace of God is seen in providing justification freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

G.

LXXV.

ETERNAL LIFE.

ROMANS vi. 23.—"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In these words we have a concise statement, or concentrated expression, of all evangelical truth. How blessed are those who shall truly and spiritually apprehend it, and enter into the possession of its treasures! The points brought before us are the Source, the Medium, and the Nature of Salvation.

I. THE SOURCE. It is the gift of God.

If it is admitted that "every good gift cometh from the Father of Lights;" that it is he who sheds down the sunshine and the shower alike on the just and on the unjust; you would suppose

it would be readily allowed that it is He exclusively who sheds down upon sinners pardon and salvation. Yet that is disputed. Men wish to have a share in the work, and impute to themselves a part of the merit of effecting it. There is in many an unconscious reference to their own characters when they sue for life—a lingering impression that they are not so far gone in transgression as to be excluded from consideration. They think their merits, though not perfect, should be accepted for what they are worth. If not good works, at least they consider such sentiments as penitence, and an intense desire for salvation, should be included in the operative cause of salvation.

But God comes forth with a positive refusal of every thing in any form, to any extent, or in any sense, proceeding from a sinner, and professing to contribute to his salvation. The broken law stands against him. His mouth is closed. "By the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified." Rom. iii. 20. It was God who said, "Deliver from going down to the pit."

II. THE MEDIUM. "Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Here appears the fact that a mediator was necessary—that it is not possible for sinful man to enter directly into the presence of the Holy God; and further, that no mediator but one of infinite worth could serve the purposes of reconciliation. For if any meaner victim would have sufficed, "the only begotten of the Father" would not have been bruised and put to grief. Has it then been declared, that not one soul of the whole human race could obtain forgiveness without the death of the Son of God? And who shall procure for us this gift? He alone, whom we offended. He could send him, and he has sent him. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God" did, in "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and," by a sacrifice "for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. viii. 3.

III. THE NATURE. "Eternal life."

In this is included a full and conclusive pardon. Sins of the greatest enormity are washed away. The sentence of condemnation has been obliterated by the hand of the Judge himself. The frown of him whose frown is death, is changed by his own free choice to a smile of entire complacency. Col. i. 19—22.

But what are the outward circumstances of a man's lot if he is not internally fitted to enjoy them? Nothing. So if a soul had the promise of eternal life, and no meetness for its enjoyment, he could not be thereby happy. But the view of so free and so undeserved a gift lays him low; the contemplation of so immense a love as that of Jesus Christ in dying for sinners animates him to obedience; while the grace of the Holy Spirit, ever supplied from above, strengthens him in all conformity to God. All that happens on earth in the mortal body, is but the promise and foretaste of what is stored up in heaven for the spirit, when it shall be clothed with its spiritual body. While the wicked shall

depart to everlasting punishment, the righteous shall go into life eternal. O who can tell what either of these shall be—the woe of him who has deliberately rejected a free salvation, or the happiness of him who hears the invitation of the Judge of all to enter into the kingdom prepared for him before the foundation of the world! Then is eternal life the gift of God begun in perfection. Then eternal death, the wages of sin, is endured in all its terror. Sinner, flee from the wrath to come!

LXXVI.

THE GOSPEL.

ROMANS x. 8, 9.—“The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

The gospel of the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, commends itself to man's attention and acceptance, because of its meetness to his circumstances, and its adaptation to his wants.

Let us consider it,

I. IN ITS NECESSITY.

1. *The necessity of the gospel is found in the ignorance of man.*

In what an awful state of “gross darkness,” about the things which are most intimately connected with his wellbeing, is man without the light of Divine revelation. How crude, how imperfect, how erroneous, how destructive, are his conceptions of God! How vain, how feeble, how utterly worthless, are his ideas of moral obligation! How misty, how bewildering, his thoughts of another life, and of a future judgment!

2. *The necessity of the gospel is found in the guilt of man.*

That men are guilty before God, is not a discovery of revelation; the feeling and conviction of guilt are universal. The word of God increases the conviction, discovers more of its extent and heinousness, but the feeling is found every where. How this guilt is to be removed, how its consequences are to be averted, nature does not discover, reason cannot find out. Whether it be possible to propitiate God or not, is not to be inferred from any thing in our condition or circumstances; and if this could be, we are equally at a loss for the mode which would be most availing and acceptable.

3. *The necessity of the gospel is found in the depravity of man.*

Human depravity is so great that there is no desire after God, but positive enmity towards him. Man is totally unlike God in

dispositions, habits, and practice. He has no desire for reconciliation with God, and no love to his character, but quite the reverse. He has an inherent love of sin—the thing which God hates. So that of himself he would never seek after the knowledge of God, nor enquire after a way of reconciliation with him.

II. IN ITS ADAPTATION.

It is adapted to the circumstances and condition of man.

1. *In its discoveries.*

“The word is nigh thee.”

The gospel discovers the true character of God; it reveals him in his nature, John iv. 24; in his attributes, as just, holy, righteous, merciful, and good; in his government, natural, providential, moral, and spiritual. The gospel discovers the true character and state of man; in his relations to God, to time, to eternity, to heaven, and to hell. It shows the depth, the greatness, the extent of his sin and guilt. It discloses the true nature of his depravity. The gospel reveals the resurrection, the future judgment, the final decision respecting the destiny of every created spirit.

2. *In its provisions.*

(1.) *There is provision for the guilt of man.*

This is by the way of propitiation and atonement. The gospel reveals a Saviour, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus.” “God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Here there is the endurance of the actual penalty due to our guilt; here there is a sufficiently valuable victim put in our stead; here there is a meeting of all the requirements of the Divine law. Sin is expiated, Divine justice satisfied, the law magnified, the authority of God upheld. By virtue of this atonement, God can be just, and the justifier of the believer in Jesus. Through the sufferings of the Redeemer, “repentance and remission of sins are preached in his name;” the most guilty who believe in him, “have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

(2.) *There is provision for his depravity.*

For its removal. This is accomplished by the restoring and renewing grace of the Holy Spirit. Nothing can reach the depravity of the human heart, of all the means and agencies connected with the gospel, if the Spirit withhold his grace. The love of God, great as it is, and so adapted to subdue the enmity of the heart, would fail in its object were it not presented by the Almighty Spirit. The truth of God, so stirring in its nature; so intimate in its connexions with man’s best interests; so fearful in its revelations, fails to affect man only when employed by the Holy Spirit. It is the promise and gift of the Holy Spirit, that makes the other provisions of redemption of any value to man. Of what use would be the atonement of Christ, or of the intercession of Christ, if man were left to the obduracy of his will; to the depravity of his heart; to the full operation of dislike to God,

and to all those other evil influences by which he is surrounded? Blessed be God it is not so! He has made provision for all the circumstances in which man can possibly be placed. The Holy Spirit enlightens the darkness of the mind, awakens the sensibilities of the soul, arouses its fears, convinces of guilt, overcomes the obduracy of the will, and leads the sinner, penitent and heart-broken, to the cross for salvation.

3. *In its promises.*

There are promises of mercy to the guilty. "Come and let us reason together, saith the Lord; and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as snow." There are promises of repentance. "Him hath God exalted to give repentance unto Israel." There are promises of the awakening power of the Holy Spirit for the impenitent. "He shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come." In a word, there are promises adapted to every condition of man as a fallen, guilty, depraved, and unholy being. The whole Bible is a book of promises.

III. IN ITS REQUIREMENTS.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Faith is the great instrument of salvation. "Faith in the blood" is essential to the possession of pardon, regeneration, and eternal life. This faith to be genuine, requires,

1. *Confession of Christ.*

There must be acknowledgment of him as the only Saviour. Every other hope must be abandoned, all other ground must be forsaken. This is one of the most difficult tasks to human nature. None but the Holy Spirit could drive the sinner out of the various refuges to which he flees. It is no easy thing to shut up the sinner to faith in Christ, to place him in a position in which he shall see that there is no other avenue of escape from coming wrath but this. Yet it must be done. No faith can be exercised until this is the state of the sinner—until he is compelled

"To groan the sinner's only plea,
'God be merciful to me.'"

This faith, to be genuine, requires,

2. *That Christ shall be its object.*

"That God hath raised Jesus Christ from the dead." Here the resurrection of Christ is put for the whole of his mediatorial work. The resurrection of Christ stands more immediately connected with the whole of his mediatorial work, than any single doctrine of the gospel. "If Christ be not risen, then is your faith vain, ye are yet in your sins." Christ, as having risen again for our justification, is to be the sole object of the sinner's faith. In his resurrection we have the evidence, that his atonement was

sufficient for our guilt; we have also the testimony of the Father's acceptance of it in our stead. Connected with his resurrection from the dead is his ascension to heaven, where he sits to dispense the blessings he has purchased; hence, to have him for the object of faith, is to come to him for these blessings.

Faith, to be genuine, requires,

3. *The trust of the heart.*

That is not saving faith which does not spring from the heart. "Thou shalt believe with thine heart." Thou shalt not merely assent to the truths, that thou art a sinner, and that Christ is a Saviour; but thou shalt rely upon him, despairing of help elsewhere, and expecting the moment of thy recumbency on him, that thou shalt be saved. The penitent is encouraged to do this now; for "the word is nigh thee," telling thee to claim Christ now for thy Saviour: "it is in thy mouth," assuring thee that he is thy Saviour; "it is in thy heart," bringing peace and joy the very moment thou dost believe.

W.

LXXVII.

CHRIST THE LORD OF THE DEAD AND THE LIVING.

ROMANS xiv. 9.—"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."

It was necessary, in order to Christ being a perfect Saviour of man, that he should have universal dominion. That dominion was given to him. This verse points to a particular province of it.

I. NOTICE THE MEANS BY WHICH CHRIST ACQUIRED HIS DOMINION OVER MAN.

"*He died.*" The great preliminary step was to offer a sacrifice which should be accepted in the room of the guilty. He therefore assumed our nature, bore our sorrows, and under circumstances of the deepest degradation died on the accursed tree.

"*He rose.*" This was an essential part of the means of acquiring his pre-eminence. Had he remained under the power of the grave, he would have been deemed the vanquished and not the vanquisher. But on the day which he had repeatedly foretold, he burst the chains of the tyrant. Soldiers who had made the world tremble, trembled before the man of sorrows. He overcame "death, and him who had the power of death."

"*He revived,*" or lived again. He had lived from all eternity, but in this moment he acquired a new life. It was a gift granted to him by law. It was the reward of his obedience unto death, and was to be used for the sake of his redeemed church. Mark

this distinction in Rev. i. 17, 18. Thus he was furnished for dominion.

II. OBSERVE THE EXTENT OF THAT DOMINION.

"Lord both of the dead and living." This includes:

1. *Control over all secular affairs.*

There is no department of human action from which he is excluded. Who can read those intimations which were given through Daniel, and through John, of the great events which were to happen, and which in great part have happened, to the chief nations upon earth, without being struck not only with the prescience which foresaw them, but with the mighty power which subordinated and does subordinate them all to a fixed object.

2. *Power over all spiritual affairs.*

All secular events terminate in spiritual consequences.

The world exists for the church. Whatever is done, is done that man may be prepared for his last account. There are interwoven with outward circumstances, spiritual influences. Christ presides over these. He sends forth his message to whom he pleases, and he pours down the grace of the Holy Spirit according to his own will.

3. *Dominion over the transition of every man from this world to the next.*

Every man while on earth is under the government of Christ, and he cannot leave his place without his providential permission. Can it be conceived that any thing so momentous as the closing of the period of probation of an immortal creature, and the ushering into an everlasting state of a responsible soul, can take place under any other than the deliberate determination of him who rules all things? "I am He that killeth and maketh alive." "I have the keys of hell and of death."

4. *Government of all who inhabit the world of spirits.*

There Christ shall be absolute. The devils were subject to him when he was on earth; they shall not be less submissive when he speaks from his throne. His saints obeyed him while below; they will not cease to serve him when all his glory is revealed to their adoring hearts. Angels waited on his footsteps during his pilgrimage here; they will wait on him and exalt him "world without end."

Application.

1. *The highest honour is due from us to Christ.*

He who has received "all power in heaven and in earth," who has received "a name which is above every name," and who has an especial government and dominion over man, must be entitled to the most devoted worship, love, and obedience of his people.

2. *There is most urgent reason for every one being in a state of friendship with Christ.*

What a situation for any one to occupy, to be out of harmony with Christ, "the Lord of dead and living!" In what world can

he live and be safe? Not in this nor in the one to come; not in heaven, not in hell;—there is not a region in which he can be beyond his dominion, or escape his power. Let every one, therefore, be reconciled to him; the more so as he pleads for such reconciliation with his own blood and through his own sufferings. Thus only shall we be ready for his call, and be glad to join the company of those who live in his happy presence.

C. M. B.

LXXVIII.

CHRIST THE WISDOM OF GOD.

1 COR. I. 24.—“The wisdom of God.”

The gospel, when first introduced to the world, was contemptuously rejected by the wise, the learned, the mighty. It prescribed rules which no philosopher had ever dared to mention, which no legislator had ever dared to promulgate; it aimed at uprooting every false system, it attacked long established prejudices; it had arrayed against it all the influence of the schools, all the power of the state, all the ignorance of the people; yet it triumphed under all these circumstances. Here is the reason—Its Author is the wisdom of God.

He is so—

I. IN THE MYSTERIOUS CONSTITUTION OF HIS PERSON.

The wisdom of God is eminently conspicuous in providing a victim qualified, able, and willing to make an atonement for sin. An atoning sacrifice must be a suffering and a satisfying sacrifice. Suffering without satisfaction would not do; satisfaction could not be had without suffering. Hence two natures were required; one capable of suffering, to endure the penalty of sin; the other capable of satisfying Divine justice.

1. *A Divine being was required for the purpose of satisfaction.*

In the whole round of being there is but one infinite nature, and nothing but an infinite nature could stamp an infinite value on an atoning sacrifice.

2. *Human nature was requisite for suffering.*

The Deity, abstractedly considered, cannot suffer; to produce suffering requires a superior nature. The suffering required in the case before us was to be of a certain character; it was to be *human* suffering—that of a human being. The penalty incurred by sin was adapted to human nature, and no other nature could so suffer as to atone. Two natures were therefore required, natures so removed from each other, that no finite imagination could conceive the possibility of their union. But herein is seen

the wisdom of God. Infinite intelligence conceived the idea, infinite power produced the union. The union of the natures constitute but one person. Here is matter for profound contemplation, and will be the theme of everlasting praise.

He is so—

II. IN THE GLORIOUS RESULTS OF HIS ATONEMENT.

1. *Here we have the consummation of God's great purpose to redeem man.*

This purpose commenced with the Father. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." The Father gave the Son. Here was the difficulty. God is infinitely righteous, infinitely just; but the Son taking upon him our nature, and dying in our stead, met all the necessities of the case. Every thing required by God was done by the Son,—satisfaction made for transgression; mercy provided for the sinner.

2. *Here we have the manifestation of the Divine attributes in their perfect and harmonized glory.*

Here we behold justice, truth, goodness, love, altogether. Angelic history presents nothing like it, human history furnishes no parallel. The justice of God is fully vindicated, and obtains satisfaction to all its claims in a victim so noble. Rather than God's law should be degraded, his only begotten Son descends to answer its claims, and not the least abatement is either solicited or made. While justice continues to punish the transgressor, we are certain its demands are unanswered; but when the sword of Jehovah returned to its scabbard, the Lord was well pleased for his righteousness' sake. Truth found in the surety all its threats executed, and all its pledges redeemed. Mercy now flows without restraint. Peace reconciles the world. In this scheme of redemption we see what God alone could contrive, and in this work what God alone could accomplish. Here all the attributes of God are exhibited in their brightest glory.

3. *Destruction of the enemies of God is another result of the atonement.*

Redemption, in Scripture, is every where set forth as a triumphant achievement. It is a victory, not of power, but of wisdom, gained over the enemy of souls; a deliverance of the prey out of the hands of the mighty. The adversary was overcome with his own weapon. The cross was the instrument employed by Satan to thwart the purpose of the Son of God, to destroy him on the field of conflict, or to throw round the scheme of redemption such infamy, ignominy, and shame, as would effectually hinder its acceptance by men. Satan reared the cross that it might be a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Gentile; but the wisdom of God converted it into the means of salvation to every one that believeth. The cross will eventually attract round it all men, all nations, all languages, all creeds, every thing that opposeth; it will subdue all things to itself, or,

more correctly speaking, he who submitted to the death of the cross will do this: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

4. *Another result of the atonement is the firm establishment of the Divine government.*

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." All of Christ's people are a willing and an obedient people. Love binds them to God. The unfallen also are preserved in their allegiance.

"Angels rejoice in Jesu's grace,
And vie with man's more favour'd race;
The blood that did for us atone
Confer'd on them some gift unknown;
Their joy through Jesu's pains abounds,
They triumph by his glorious wounds,
Or 'stablished and confirm'd by him
Who did our lower world redeem,
Secure they keep their blest estate,
Firm on an everlasting seat:
Or raised above themselves, aspire
In bliss improved, in glory higher."

He is so—

III. IN THE PRACTICAL DISPENSATION OF HIS GOSPEL.

1. *There is the agency employed.*

The preaching of the gospel, not by angelic beings—but by men; not by the wise, the mighty, and the noble—but by the foolish and weak things of the world; not with excellency of speech or of wisdom—but by demonstration of the Spirit.

2. *There is the influence promised.*

All the good that is done in the world, the Lord doeth it. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." The triumphs of the cross of Christ in the world are owing entirely to the agency of the Holy Spirit. The scheme of redemption is so arranged in all its parts, as to show that God is all in all. All originated in the grace of God; and all is intended for the glory of God; and all that is done is by the operation of God. No part of salvation is owing to man; in no one particular is it by might or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

L

LXXIX.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

1 COR. i. 23, 24.—“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

Many have wished, with Augustine, to have seen Paul in the pulpit, to listen to the truth as it flowed from his lips, to have witnessed his zeal in the cause of Christ, and his anxiety and earnestness for the salvation of souls. But although this is impossible, we know, for we have the record, the great theme on which he dwelt. It was not the learning or philosophy of this world; it was not cold, lifeless, speculative theology; it was Christ crucified; it was “repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I. THE GREAT THEME OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING.

“We preach Christ crucified.”

The apostles no doubt comprehended all those doctrines which are connected with the great fact of the mission of the Son of God, the Christ crucified.

Thus they preached Christ,

1. *In the divinity of his person.*

They were not ashamed to avow their belief of the Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth; they shrank not from charging the Jews that they had crucified the Lord of life and glory. They hesitated not to give to him who was crucified, the names and titles which belong exclusively to the supreme God. They preached, that possessing the titles, he also inherits the perfections and attributes of the everlasting Father. Thus they tell us, that “He is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” that in him “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” that he “is God over all, blessed for ever.”

2. *In the perfection of his atonement.*

Their testimony was, that God had “set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.” They preached the fallen, guilty, and depraved condition of man; his total inability to answer the demands, or appease the justice of God. They preached, that God provided for man in these circumstances a suitable remedy, a sufficient Saviour. That when there was no eye to pity, no arm to save, he came travelling in the greatness of his strength, treading the winepress of the wrath of God, achieving deliverance for the whole of the human family.

(1.) *They preached the atonement in its nature.*

As a visitation of the wrath of God due to sin, on him, in the sinner’s stead. “He was delivered up by the determinate counsel

and foreknowledge of God." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

(2.) *They preached it in its sufficiency.*

"He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." "He is exalted, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

(3.) *They preached it in the extent and duration of its efficacy.*

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him;" but "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."

3. *In the variety of his offices.*

They preached Christ *as a prophet*; they have recorded many of his sayings, and no doubt many others were delivered orally. The precepts and example of Christ were the rule of practice on which the apostles insisted when pressing the high claims of holiness in heart and life. They preached him *as a priest*. They proclaimed his ascension to heaven in the character of advocate for men; they made known that he ever liveth as intercessor before the throne of God; they represented him as the Lamb slain in the midst of the throne. They preached him *as a king*. "Him hath God highly exalted," to dispense, as sovereign of the universe, the blessings of pardon and salvation to his guilty subjects. They preached the universal extension of his kingdom; the entire overthrow of all his enemies; the subjugation of all things to his will; the putting down of all authority and power. They proclaimed him as the *universal judge*. "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained."

II. THE DIVERSITY OF EFFECTS WHICH ATTENDED ITS PUBLICATION.

1. *To some it was offensive.*

It was to the Jew a stumbling block, to the Greek foolishness. It did not meet the worldly expectations of the one, and it had no charms for the other. The one was disappointed in it, the other treated it with scorn. It was offensive to both Jew and Greek, because it was opposed to their pride; it poured contempt on their pretensions; it was in opposition to their preconceptions and to their predilections.

2. *To others it was the manifestation of the wisdom and power of God.*

The wisdom of God is witnessed in the gospel, in the way in which the difficulties were obviated which opposed the salvation of man. In the adaptation of means which it supplies for this object:—these are the sacrifice of Christ and the agency of the Spirit. It is also seen in the conditions which are appointed as necessary to the possession of its benefits, and in the choice of the instruments who were ordained to propagate it.

The gospel is the power of God; for its promulgation is accompanied by the energy of the Holy Spirit. It is the power of God; for by its means men are “turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”

B—s.

LXXX.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

1 COR. II. 2.—“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

What a noble declaration is this! He who made it was a man of no ordinary intellect, of no common attainments; it is the declaration of one who was trained at the feet of Gamaliel, who was well versed in all the literature of the time, and who had the power of appreciating it. They to whom the declaration was made, were celebrated for their learning, their systems of philosophy, and their elegant literature; yet Paul was “determined not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

1. HIS DETERMINATION.

Paul presented himself at Corinth in the character of a public teacher. As such he could have added to their information on many subjects; he could have corrected many of their false views, and exposed the folly of many of their systems; he could have instructed them in true philosophy, in opposition to their own philosophy, falsely so called; he could have treated every subject eloquently; he could have invested the most common subjects with interest; he could have thrown fresh light around all, and have

exhibited them in aspects entirely new ; yet, although he was thus gifted, he determined to confine himself to one topic, though that was to the Greek foolishness, "Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

1. *The object of his regard.* "Jesus Christ."

A name of contempt with many, but to the apostle the chiefest among ten thousand. It is the name of the *Saviour*, of the "Mighty One of Jacob," "who is mighty to save." "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." It is the name of the God-man, of the anointed of the Father, of the well-beloved Son, of him who has the government on his shoulder, of him who has sat down on the throne of God till all things are subdued under him. But it was not as the governor of the world that he was the subject of Paul's determination.

2. *The aspect in which he regarded him.* "And him crucified."

"God forbid," exclaims the apostle, in another place, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ crucified is every thing to guilty sinners ; it is the foundation of every hope in which we indulge ; it is the ground of every expectation that we form ; "other foundation can no man lay," for "there is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved ;" nor could we have been saved by his had he not been crucified. Christ crucified is the foundation of the world's hopes ; for it tells of infinite justice satisfied, the law magnified, and the way opened, for the forgiveness of sin.

II. HIS REASONS FOR THIS DETERMINATION.

"I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This knowledge has various characteristics which other knowledge is destitute of.

1. *It is certain.*

There is no uncertainty about the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. The religion of Christ is one of facts ; it is based on facts ; it teaches facts ; its doctrines are facts ; its duties are facts ; its rewards are facts. It is supported by all kinds of evidence.

2. *It is suitable.*

The knowledge of Christ crucified, is just the knowledge that a sinner, a guilty, helpless, lost, undone sinner, stands in need of. Every penitent feels its suitability, every believer rejoices therein.

3. *It is extensive.*

The knowledge of Christ includes the knowledge of a great many other things. The penitent, believing sinner, however ignorant of many things, has yet more extensive, and more certain knowledge, than the wisest philosophers of Greece or Rome. He is assured of the existence of a God ; he knows something of his nature and character ; he is acquainted with the soul's immortality, with the doctrine of the resurrection, and that of the future judgment ; things with which the wisest of

the ancients had no certain acquaintance. He knows something, too, of the evil of sin ; he has learned that at the cross. He knows something too of the principles of moral obligation ; he is acquainted also with the richest development of the Divine character ever made to the world ; he sees it in the cross of Christ.

4. *It is sanctified.*

The knowledge of Christ crucified, uniformly changes the character and nature of man. The effects of this knowledge are the same every where. The gospel exerts precisely the same kind of influence, and is productive of the same changes, on the savage, on the civilized, on the barbarian, on Scythian, and bond or free. This knowledge moulds them who possess it, into the image and likeness of its great subject. "He who has this hope in himself, purifieth himself even as he is pure."

J.

LXXXI.

CHRIST THE SOLE FOUNDATION.

1 Cor. iii. 11.—"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

It was natural to a person writing amid the splendid architecture of the ancient cities of Greece, to find illustrations of his thoughts in those objects. The eye of Paul was not inobservant of the works either of God or of man ; but so devoted was he in the great end of human existence, which seemed to be forgotten by all around him, that he made little use of his observations, except to enforce his religious convictions. It was most obvious that the stability of every structure depended on its foundation—yet many lay for the foundation of their eternal hopes that which cannot sustain them, but in the end will cover them with confusion.

I. It may be useful to review some of the foundations which man has laid. There is,

1. *The foundation of personal merit.*

There are few who do not admit that they have some imperfections, and that they fall occasionally into error ; nay, that they are, in the general acceptance of the word, "sinners." But along with this there is an inner satisfaction, and a predominant hope of themselves. They judge that, though falling short of the perfect standard, they do the best that can be done, considering their natural constitution, their circumstances, and their temptations. They do not see the principle which holds in *all* governments, that "he who offends in one point, is guilty of all"—that "cursed

is he who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them."

2. *The foundation of divine mercy.*

"Can it be imagined," say some triumphantly, "that our Creator, after having seen us do our best, will not pass over the things in which we have come short? We never can believe that he will be so strict as to mark all iniquity, and insist upon having the utmost farthing of our debt. We have too much confidence in his goodness to believe this." This is plausible. But it is, in fact, less an acknowledgment of his mercy, than an imputation on his justice—and justice is as essential to his nature as mercy. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." He will "by no means clear the guilty."

3. *The foundation of good resolutions.*

How many rest upon this sand! It might be supposed to be impossible that confidence could be placed on mere intentions. But many console themselves with having thought aright, and felt aright—substituting the intention for the action. Few of those now in hell ever meant to be there. "Its floors are paved with good intentions."

II. WE MUST MARK THE FIRM DECLARATION, THAT THE ONLY REAL FOUNDATION IS JESUS CHRIST.

1. *He is the chosen foundation.*

He was appointed by divine authority. He was predicted to our first parents in an ever memorable promise. (Gen. iii. 15.) In all the types of the Levitical law he was celebrated. When he actually came he was publicly attested by signs from heaven, and the Father's own voice. There is great satisfaction in this, for we must concede to God an unerring wisdom. We never should have known what was necessary for human salvation had he not told us—and he told us by the appointment of what was required. He satisfied his own claims.

2. *He is the all-sufficient foundation.*

All others are selected on an insufficient estimate of the weight to be sustained. All others proceed upon ignorance of the enormity of sin. This recognises the greatness of the Moral Ruler, the spirituality of his law, the supreme claims of his government. It was not "the blood of bulls and of goats," it was not the service and the sacrifices of angels, it was not thousands of gold and silver, which could effect the ransom. He who was "in the beginning with God, and was God," must assume our nature, and give to his offering an infinite intrinsic worth. On "that rock" alone is the church safe.

3. *He is the morally-elevating foundation.*

You may conceive of a structure which rests on a foundation sufficiently secure, but so situated as to be enveloped in fogs and storms; you may conceive of another which is placed in a position where the air and the sunshine make it ever salubrious and de-

lightful. Now, he who rests on Christ is not only safe, but raised above whatever is noxious, and introduced into an atmosphere exhilarating and salutary. In all other attempted means of salvation, the attention of the soul is turned in upon itself; but in this it is abstracted from every thing created and imperfect, and made to rest with fixed regard upon what is spotless and divine. Thus the heart is raised above disquietude and fear, and made meet for "the inheritance of the saints."

APPLICATION:—

Why further describe the worth of this foundation? You see there is "none other." There can be "salvation" only in Him. The question, then, is limited and definite:—Have you accepted him by faith? Do you, not in word only, but in fact, renounce all others, and build solely on this rock—"the rock of ages?" What is important on earth if this be not important?—C. M. B.

LXXXII.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

1 COR. XV. 34—"Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame."

The Corinthians, highly distinguished in the possession of extraordinary gifts, were in many respects shamefully ignorant. We have a proof in the text. Knowledge lies at the foundation of practical religion; it is the parent of piety. Ignorance is the fruitful source of every species of wickedness. The grossest abominations of the heathen, the licentiousness and iniquity of the civilized world, are to be traced to an ignorance of the blessed God.

I. THE KNOWLEDGE SPOKEN OF.

This knowledge is not of the Divine essence; such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it must infinitely and eternally surpass the grasp of the most gigantic mind. "Canst thou by searching find out God?"

1. *It is theoretical.*

It is head knowledge, being in a considerable degree intellectual. "The heavens declare the glory of God;" from the visible things of the creation may be inferred the existence of a great first cause. From his word we deduce his being, and wisdom, and power, and goodness; from his invaluable word we learn exclusively his justice, his holiness, and his mercy. From the Bible alone we acquire clear, satisfactory, consistent knowledge of God. Here is a revelation of himself, as self-existent; of his omnipresence; and of the greatness of his power. Here

we find holiness, leading him to view sin with detestation—justice, which pledges him to punish all that is offensive to his holiness. Here he is seen as the just God, yet compassionate Saviour. Here stern justice embraces mercy, and is converted into tenderness by overflowing grace.

2. *It is experimental.*

Our knowledge of God may be mere theory; but if he remove the vail from our understandings, discover to us our sins, cause us to feel ourselves loathsome and foul, our knowledge will be more than theory, it will partake of the character of experience. And if, in addition to this, we have in ourselves the proof of his power, in the renewal of our nature; the forgiveness of our sins; the saving us from unholy tempers, dispositions, and desires; our knowledge is still further experimental.

3. *It is practical.*

The knowledge of God not only enlightens the understanding and informs the judgment; it changes and reforms the life. There is no perfection of the blessed God, but which, if experimentally known, will have a practical influence upon us. The knowledge which does not improve the life is of very little worth.

II. THE CHARACTERS REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT.

1. *Those who do not fear God.*

These are evidently destitute of this knowledge. God is awful in power, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, terrible in majesty, jealous of his law; it is, then, a fearful thing to fall under his displeasure. Those who know God, fear to offend him, reverence his law, tremble at his justice, and endeavour to avoid his displeasure, by shunning whatever is opposed to his holiness. But there are those who do not revere his name; do not regard his threatenings; who trample on his laws, and abuse his goodness. They do not know, and therefore do not fear him.

2. *Those who do not trust him.*

Those in the church of God whom we call penitents, have only a partial knowledge of God. They know his purity, his justice, and his power;—they fear to offend him; they dread his displeasure; but they do not trust their guilty souls to his mercy;—they do not rest on the atonement; they have not this knowledge of God.

3. *Those who do not love him.*

These show the very same ignorance of the glories and perfections of his name and character; they are unacquainted with the wonders of his works, and the wisdom of his ways. Where there is a want of love, there is a want of the knowledge of God.

III. THE DISAPPROBATION EXPRESSED.

It is a great shame not to have the knowledge of God, for nothing is so important. It is important for the miserable to know where happiness is to be found; for an immortal spirit to be acquainted with that which is to be its portion for ever.

To obtain this knowledge,

1. *We have adequate means.*

The volume of nature, and the more precious volume of inspiration, lie open before us. The gospel, exhibiting to us "God reconciling the world to himself," is preached at our very doors. There is a throne of grace to which all may come; and there is the Holy Spirit promised and given to all.

2. *We have adequate faculties.*

God, in the constitution of our moral and intellectual nature, has provided, not only for the attainment of every other kind of knowledge, but especially for the acquisition of this, the most important of all.

3. *We have the most urgent motives.*

Ignorance of God is shameful; a knowledge of him is honourable. Those who are destitute of this knowledge will be made examples of vengeance, when the "Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God;" at the same time, they who have this knowledge will be put in possession of eternal life. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Let each ask, Do I know God? Is my knowledge real? Do I know him savingly?
A.

LXXXIII.

THE TERROR OF THE LORD.

2 COR. v. 11.—"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

It is the duty of the minister of the gospel to employ all the means, to urge every motive, and to enforce every reason in his power, if by any means he can save a soul from death.

I. THE SUBJECT OF CONSIDERATION.

"The terror of the Lord."

This expression refers to the day of judgment, which may well be called the "terror of the Lord."

1. *On account of its awful forerunners.*

Our Lord has left a very graphic description of the circumstances that shall precede the great day. "Nation shall rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." There will be convulsions in nature, and there will be convulsions in civil and political society. Famine, fire, pestilence, and sword, shall be employed against men. Divers earthquakes in various places shall increase the calamities, and add to the sufferings, of the dwellers on earth. The stars shall fall, the sun no more give light, the whole physical universe shall be dissolved. We know not the connexion between the physical and moral, the mental and material worlds: but the physical world, in consequence of this connexion, shall

undergo an entire renovation, just when the moral is the subject of investigation. Add to these things, the resurrection from the dead, the assembling of all the partakers of human nature; and just as this assembly is formed, the rolling away of the earth from their feet, an immense ball of fire, till it appears like a shrivelled parchment scroll;—and you have some of the awful forerunners of this dreadful day.

“The terror of the Lord.” It is so,

2. *Because of the glorious appearing of the judge.*

We read in the prophet Daniel, that the Son of man appeared to the prophet in glory, and that the prophet, overcome by the glorious majesty of his appearance, fell before him as one dead. Similar to this was the effect upon the apostle John, in the apocalyptical vision; but if so glorious his appearing then, what will it be when he cometh, not only in his own glory, but in the glory of his Father and of the holy angels. Attended by these manifestations of power and majesty, how terrible will be the sight!

3. *On account of the sentence which will then be pronounced.*

It is the “day of judgment,” the day for giving judgment; the day of pronouncing on the character of human actions; the day of settling the destiny of human beings. The sentence delivered will be,

(1.) *Decisive.*

From it there will be no appeal. There is no higher tribunal; there is no other court; there is no way now of averting condemnation; there remaineth now no more sacrifice for sins; the provisions of mediation reach not to that day.

(2.) *Eternal.*

The state fixed on that day continues for ever. There can then be no alteration in character. The dispositions and habits formed in time, which underwent no alteration before death, are now fixed for eternity.

(3.) *To the wicked, to those who have rejected Christ, it will be appalling.*

The sentence will be to “everlasting fire.” A fire of their own choice; for it was not prepared for them, but for the devil and his angels. But these chose to dwell there rather than with God.

II. THE APOSTLE'S ASSURANCE OF IT.

“Knowing the terror of the Lord.”

The apostle knew the “terror of the Lord,”

1. *By experience.*

When journeying to Damascus he was struck to the ground by the “terror of the Lord.” He was then the subject of those throes of agony which are produced by the deep conviction of being a lost, undone sinner. For three days did this dreadful state continue, in which he was consciously alive to all the horrors of his situation, and from which he knew of no mode of deliverance. This state of his, for aught he knew, might be the presage of an eternal storm.

2. *He had seen its effects on others.*

There was the case of the Philippian jailer, who "called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas," his prisoners; so remarkable was the influence of Jehovah's presence and power.

3. *He was acquainted with Scripture facts.*

He had read of the deluge, by which the whole population of the globe had been destroyed at once. He was acquainted with the utter overthrow and destruction of the cities of the plain. But more especially had he studied this subject, in the awaking of Jehovah's sword against the Man that was his fellow; in the pouring out of the vial of wrath on the head of his only begotten Son; in the treading of the winepress of the wrath of God, when accomplishing the expiation of human guilt.

III. THE IMPROVEMENT HE MADE OF IT.

"Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,"

1. *To flee from the wrath to come.*

He urged men to avail themselves of the offers of mercy, while they were made. He persuaded them affectionately, tenderly, earnestly, beseechingly, to escape for their lives.

2. *To do it at once.*

He could admit of no plea as justifying delay in a matter of so much importance. The whole of a long life is little enough to work out salvation; but when so much of that life has been trifled away, nay, worse than that, when so much of it has been spent in treasuring up wrath, in ensuring damnation, he could not but feel how imperative it was for sinners to repent at once.

Let us learn to feel for souls; to do all in our power to save them; to employ our knowledge for their eternal welfare. Let us not be content merely to wish them well. Let us urge them, intreat them, persuade them, to escape the coming wrath.

B—T.

LXXXIV.

THE GREAT CHANGE.

2 Cor. v. 17.—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

Men often imagine that there is no great difference between saints and sinners. But the Scriptures declare that there is a vast difference, so vast that the Christian is nothing less than a *new creature*. To examine this great change is the object of the present discourse.

I. IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE HAS A NEW GOD.

The nature of the human soul is such that it must have a god, in other words, a supreme object of affection, which, in the Scrip-

tures, is said to be a man's God. Now man, since the fall, has ceased to love Jehovah supremely, and self in some form or other has become the supreme object of affection. But if any man be in Christ, he is in this respect a new creature; for he now loves God in Christ supremely, and therefore he has a *new* God.

II. HE HAS A NEW OBJECT OF PURSUIT.

When *self* was his God, man of course made the gratification of self the object of his pursuit. But he who is in Christ has changed his God, and consequently the object of his pursuit. His grand end and aim is now the glory of God. As the apostle says, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Cor. vi. 20.

III. HE ADOPTS A NEW RULE OF ACTION.

Every man adopts such a rule of action as he thinks will accomplish his object. The man who is in Christ having changed his grand object of pursuit, changes of course his rule of action. His rule was formerly to do only those things which promote his own advantage. His rule is now to do only those things which God declares will glorify him. His habitual petition is, Not my will, but thine be done.

IV. HE LIVES A NEW LIFE.

He lives a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him. Coloss. ii. 20. Hence he does not willingly and wilfully commit sin, or neglect duty. This obedience springs from *new views and feelings* respecting God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, himself, and his fellow-men.

1. *He has new views and feelings respecting God.*

Formerly he saw no beauty or excellence to admire in God; he shrank in terror from his holiness, purity, and justice. Now, beholding God manifest in the flesh, he cries, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee?"

2. *He has new views and feelings with regard to Jesus Christ.*

Before, he thought of Christ only as a good man who taught a very excellent system of morality; now he sees him as the Saviour of sinners, giving his life for the life of the world; the Advocate with the Father, and the propitiation for our sins. Take away from him his Saviour, and you take away from him his only hope. Then he would have no access to God; no deliverer from sin; no Saviour from perdition; since it is only by the plan of redemption that God can be just, and the justifier of the ungodly.

3. *He has new views and feelings with regard to the Holy Spirit.*

Formerly, he hardly so much as knew whether there was any Holy Ghost. Now he feels that without the Spirit's influences he can do nothing, and rejoices in the promised aid. He knows by experience the meaning of such words as these:—"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we

should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom. viii. 26.)

4. *He has new views and feelings with regard to himself.*

He no longer looks upon himself as a very moral and respectable person. He sees now that his whole life has been a long tissue of transgression—a state of entire enmity to God, and alienation from him—and that for the first time he feels his need of a Saviour.

5. *He has new views and feelings with regard to his fellow-men.*

Formerly, he loved none but those who were in some way or other connected with self. Now, he loves his fellow-men, and looks upon them as immortal beings, whom it is his mission and privilege to endeavour to bring unto his Redeemer.

Such are the believer's new views and feelings; the consequence of which is, that,

V. HE HAS NEW JOYS.

Once he rejoiced in the world and in himself; but his joys were fleeting, momentary, and mixed with anxiety. Now he rejoices in the glory of God, and the rising prospects of Immanuel's kingdom.

VI. HE HAS NEW HOPES.

He was once without God in the world, and therefore without hope (Eph. ii. 12.); or, if he had a hope, it was the hope of the hypocrite that perisheth—a groundless hope, like the house built upon sand. Now he has a *good* hope, arising from the love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Spirit of God.

APPLICATION:—

The great difference between the sinner and the saint.

S.

LXXXV.

THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

2 COR. ix. 15—"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

We must not suppose, from this language, that there is any posteriority on the part of the Son to the Father. The Son's goings forth have been "from of old, even from everlasting." Neither are we to imagine that there is any inferiority in nature on the part of the Son. He possesses the same nature; to him are ascribed the same perfections; he possesses the same attributes.

I. CHRIST IS HERE EXHIBITED AS THE GIFT OF GOD.

He is so because—

1. *He was appointed by the Father to the work of substitution.*

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." God appointed his Son to suffer the consequences of our offences. He suffered that which, but for his doing so, we must have suffered in our own persons.

2. *Christ, as the sinner's substitute, has suffered all the consequences which his situation entailed.*

He undertook to make satisfaction for us. The sufferings of the Garden and the Cross were part of the consequences. But his chief sufferings were those inflicted by the hand of his Father,

"Who in the day
Of his anger, did lay
Our sins on the Lamb,
And he bore them away."

It was the Father who mingled the ingredients of the bitter cup. "It pleased the Father to bruise him."

3. *Christ is the gift of God to every penitent believer.*

To him who believes the gospel is given every blessing of the gospel. Its chief blessing is, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

"To him who in his name believes,
Eternal life with him is given,
Into himself he all receives,
Pardon, and holiness, and heaven."

II. HE IS THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT OF GOD.

The term "unspeakable" rarely occurs in the Scriptures; it occurs twice in the writings of Paul, and once in the epistles of Peter. It is applied in one to the rejoicing of Christians: "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;" and in the other, to the revelations made to Paul in the third heavens; in our text, it is applied to the gift of Christ.

1. *It is unspeakably great.*

Its greatness surpasses expression. "God so loved the world." The great gift we are contemplating is Divine; that he is so, is declared by a long train of prophecy; by the sacrifices which were offered under the Mosaic economy; by the offers of pardon and reconciliation which were made through him: all these declare that Jesus is Jehovah. What an unspeakable gift!

3. *It is unspeakably free.*

It was not wrung from the justice of God; it was absolutely and infinitely spontaneous; a free gift of charity; a spontaneous boon; but I cannot tell you how free a gift it is. All the gifts of God, the dew, the rain, the air, the light, are free; but this is freer than all the rest; this is the noontide effulgence of the Divine love.

3. *It is unspeakably necessary.*

The circumstances of those on whom it is bestowed enhance its value. We were lost; Christ only could find us. We were dead; none but Christ could give us life. We were afar off; none but Christ could bring us nigh. We were guilty; and none but Christ could procure us pardon. There is no other way in which man might be saved. Heb. ii. 10.

4. *It is unspeakably efficacious.*

It is so for all who die in infancy and childhood; "of such is the kingdom of heaven." It is efficacious for all who receive it. "To as many as received him, he gave power to become the sons of God." None will ultimately perish but those who reject the gift.

III. FOR THIS GIFT THANKS ARE TO BE RETURNED TO GOD.

1. *These thanks should be personal.*

The chorus, the mighty chorus, of gratitude and adoration, which swells before the throne, is made up of individual notes; each of the blood-bought, blood-washed throng, has his separate song. Let us imitate them; let every heart and every voice send forth its song of praise.

2. *They must be fervent.*

Many persons are afraid of enthusiasm. An enthusiasm that is nothing but a compound of ignorance and animal excitement, we have need to be afraid of. But there is a healthful kind of enthusiasm; it is found in the breast of the individual who feels that he owes every thing to the love of God; who feels that his heart is changed and his destiny altered by it. From such a one cannot proceed a cold, stinted, dwarfish meed of praise.

3. *They ought to be practical.*

The gift is unspeakable. We may not be able to speak our thanks, but we must live them; they must be embodied in a holy life and pure conversation. They must be exhibited in the thousand charities to which we are called to attach ourselves. We must make it appear that we feel the value of this gift of God, by continually enquiring, "What can we render unto the Lord?"

B—T.

LXXXVI.
SALVATION.

EPHES. II. 8, 9.—"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

The first preachers of the gospel were not content with merely defining the nature of salvation; they were careful to point out the way of its attainment, and they were urgent in pressing its acceptance. They were never satisfied with any results of their

ministry, that were not connected with personal enquiry for salvation.

I. THE NATURE OF SALVATION.

Salvation in its nature embraces a twofold deliverance.

1. *Deliverance from the guilt of sin, or justification.*

"There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." An entire freedom from *all* condemnation, is the special privilege of all that believe. This is one very frequent use of the term salvation. When so employed, it denotes deliverance from all the penal consequences of transgression. It denotes *present* deliverance. Justification is an act in *time*. It takes place at the moment in which the penitent believes.

2. *Deliverance from the power and being of sin, or sanctification.*

"For we are his *workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." "He shall save his people from their sins." Salvation from condemnation, without salvation from sin, would be a blessing of little value, if it could be called a blessing at all. The great purpose of redeeming love was to prepare a peculiar people, zealous of good works; a people like God, holy, pure, and good. Sanctification commences at the very moment that a sinner is justified, and is progressive, according to the faith of the subject, till it ends in glorification.

II. THE SOURCE FROM WHICH OUR SALVATION FLOWS.

"By grace are ye saved."

The grace of God is his love, attired in the garments of mercy; his benevolence, exhibiting itself in compassion for the guilty; it is undeserved favour making provision for the recovery of the lost. We see the grace of God,

1. *In the origin of salvation.*

By one act of transgression man forfeited all his blessings, and exposed himself to the curse of the Almighty God. His restoration to the Divine favour was beyond his power, but God at once made provision for it, and within a few hours after the fall, gave him the promise of a Redeemer. Nothing was done by man to merit the promise; for not only was he guilty of flagrant transgression, but, as far as we can ascertain from the narrative, he was by no means penitent for his offence.

We see the grace of God,

2. *In the accomplishment of salvation.*

The love and grace of God were especially displayed when Christ died on the cross. "In this was manifested the love of God." The promise of a Redeemer illustrated the grace of God, the coming of the Redeemer exhibited it. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared," is now more apparent; Christ has died on the cross. This expression "hath appeared," is remarkable. It intimates that the Lord Jesus Christ is the grace of God embodied. Similar to the figure employed by the

same apostle to the Hebrews, when he exhorts them to "come boldly to the throne of grace," that is, the throne on which Grace is seated. Especially, then, is the grace of God seen in the accomplishment of salvation by the death of the cross. He humbled himself to death, *even* the death of the cross.

The grace of God is seen,

3. *In the application of salvation.*

The natural state of man is such, that if left to himself, he will never enquire after the way of being saved. He has no apprehension of its necessity, nor any perception of its value. He posts on to ruin without thinking of his course, or having any care as to its termination. He needs awakening to the full sense of his state; he needs convincing of the entire enormity of his guilt; he needs to be made sensible of the full extent of his danger; and this is done for him and in him by the "grace of God." It is the "Spirit of grace" that arrests the fugitive from God when on his career to hell; it is He that awakens the enquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" It is He that kindles the flame of godly sorrow; it is He that leadeth the penitent to Christ, and enables to take hold of the covenant of mercy. He it is who communicates peace to the conscience, joy to the soul.

III. THE WAY IN WHICH SALVATION IS TO BE OBTAINED.

"Through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

1. *It is a plain way.*

It is the way of faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. It is not a mere faith of the head, not a mere assent to the truth of any statement of facts; it is the simple trust of a guilty but penitent sinner, that Christ has died in his stead, joined with an expectation of mercy for his sake. When the Israelite killed the paschal lamb, he did not owe his safety to that, but entirely to the sprinkling of its blood; had he not sprinkled the blood, the death of the lamb would have been of no avail. Now the Israelite was saved by faith; he believed that if the blood were sprinkled he would be saved. So it is with the penitent sinner; he is expected to believe that the blood of Christ sprinkled upon his soul will be the sure means of his salvation; and, believing that, he ought to come and ask God to sprinkle it upon him.

2. *It is a divine way.*

Salvation is by faith; and both the blessing itself and the means of obtaining it are the gift of God. "Take hold of my strength," is the exhortation of God, in one of the prophets, "and be at peace with me." Faith, though necessary to salvation, cannot be exercised at the pleasure of any man; it is not within the power of any man's producing, for it is of the "operation of God." Hence the weight of the injunction, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Work while God works;

for when he ceases, your power and opportunity cease. Work now! for he is under no necessity to continue working. He works of his own good pleasure, and giveth over when it pleaseth him.

3. *It is a humiliating way.*

The way of salvation lays human pride prostrate in the dust. Man can do nothing of himself towards his salvation. The power that provides, and the power that applies salvation, together with the power to apply for it, is of God; Christ is the Author and Finisher of faith.

4. *It is a practical way.*

Salvation by grace leads not into antinomianism, but into holiness. They who are the saved of the Lord are found continually inquiring, "Shall I sin that grace may abound? God forbid."

IV. PRESS ITS ACCEPTANCE.

1. *Have you a sufficiently deep conviction of your need of this salvation?*

If not,—seek it at once; your immediate duty as well as your highest interest render it imperative, that you seek to God for deep, heartfelt conviction of your lost condition.

2. *Learn to apply for this salvation in the right way.*

Lay aside all idea of fitting yourselves for mercy. Come at once to the Saviour; there is no other way; if you come at all, you must come this way. Your deferring it will not open another way. Come then at once.

3. *Learn to come for it at the right time.*

Faith is the gift of God. Avail yourselves of the power which God now supplies; seize hold of the moment that is now passing over you. Remember that you cannot command God, in whose hands your breath is. He may never again give you the power to believe. O, then, let this be with you the accepted time, the day of salvation!

H.

LXXXVII.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION.

EPHESIANS VI. 17.—"Take the helmet of salvation."

The Christian's is a life of warfare. His path abounds with dangers, and is beset with foes. Every inch of it is contested, and, unless he is exceedingly watchful, he will one day fall by the hand of his enemy. "We wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." This being so, it beloveth the Christian to avail him-

self of all the means in his power to repel the enemy, and especially it behoveth him to take unto himself the whole armour of God.

To one part of that armour we now invite your serious attention.

I. ITS NATURE.

"The helmet of salvation."

Some light is thrown on this passage, by a parallel one in the first epistle to the Thessalonians: "And for a helmet, the hope of salvation." The salvation referred to, is ultimate salvation—not that which consists in present deliverance from condemnation and in regeneration of nature, but that which consisteth in eternal life. In this sense the word is used in various passages. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for your salvation is nearer than when ye believed." "Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

This salvation is the object of hope.

"Begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." "For we are saved by hope." Hope takes hold of eternal salvation. It looks forward to it with expectation and strong desire. It is not a cold, inanimate thing. They that possess this hope, look forward with longing desire for its fruition.

II. ITS USES.

"Take the *helmet* of salvation."

A helmet is a protection for the head. The hope of salvation is protection for the mind. Is faith assaulted; are efforts made to weaken your confidence in God, by injecting doubts into your mind?—the hope of salvation serves as a helmet, as a protection.

1. *The hope of salvation is a helmet, for it furnishes confidence in the day of battle.*

Satan in his fiercest assaults on him who possesseth this hope, obtaineth no advantage. "Though I fall, I shall rise again." "I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

2. *The hope of salvation is a helmet, for it gives the assurance of final triumph.*

"If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall affliction, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

E.

LXXXVIII.

THE CHRISTIAN MOTTO.

PHILIPPIANS I. 21.—“ For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

There is something defective in the general character of the Christian experience of the present age. Our Christian attainments and spiritual enjoyments will not bear comparison with those of the early followers of Christ. Where is the individual who in the present day can say to his fellow Christians, “ Be ye followers of me ? ” Yet such was the language addressed by the apostle to the churches of his time. How he was enabled to do so, we may learn from the declaration of the text.

I. THE SCOPE OF THE PASSAGE VIEWED AS THE MOTTO OF THE APOSTLE'S LIFE.

1. *It exhibits the principle of his life.*

There are various kinds of life ; vegetable, animal, rational, and spiritual, and each of these have a distinct principle. The principle of vegetable life confines it to a particular locality ; that of animal life permits of locomotion ; the rational principle consists in consciousness ; and that of spiritual is accountability and entire subjection to Christ. Paul had every thought, feeling, purpose, and action, in entire subservience to Christ and his cause.

2. *The will of Christ was his rule.*

He lived *for* Christ. He pursued not his own plans, but he was constantly engaged in those of Christ. He sometimes represents himself as a wise master-builder—but the builder rears his edifice on the plan and design of the architect. At other times he represents himself as a servant—now the servant does not do as he pleases, but what his master pleases.

3. *The glory of Christ was his object.*

No man of all men that ever lived, had such opportunities of acquiring fame as Paul. His learning, his talents, his intellect, his oratory, were a basis on which he might have reared a pedestal on which he might have placed himself, and thereby attracted the eyes of an applauding world. Such a pedestal he did rear ; but Christ was on its summit, to whom he delighted to direct the attention and regards of all the myriads that attended on his ministry.

4. *The approbation of Christ was all that he cared for in his life.*

To him it mattered not what the world thought or said of him, could he but finish his course with joy, and receive the approval of his master, “ Well done, good and faithful servant.” It was for this, that he was “ in labours more abundant, and in deaths oft,” while engaged in promoting the cause of Christ in the world.

II. SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHY WE OUGHT TO ADOPT THIS MOTTO.

1. *The happiness of such a life.*

This ought to be a great inducement to imitate the apostle in the motto of his life. They who are truly devoted to Christ and his cause are the happiest of mortals. The degree of a believer's enjoyment depends on the extent of his devotedness to Christ. Christ is the well-spring of all true happiness, and he who lives nearest to him, and who is the most often in communion with him, has the largest share. He who has much to do for Christ whose mind, and heart, and hands, are employed in his cause, is less exposed to real danger than one not so fully engaged. Temptations have less power. Wanderings from the right way are not so frequent. Religious duties are not felt to be irksome, but are engaged in as privileges, and are used as sources of enjoyment.

2. *The exaltation of such a life.*

The possessor of such a life is farther removed from the mere animal, than others who do not possess it. He is nearly allied to angelic beings, who stand in the presence of God continually, and who are employed in doing his will. He is also allied to God himself; he partakes of the Divine nature; he is employed in Divine service, bearing the honourable distinction of being a "co-worker together with God." Thus the possessors of such a life are truly ennobled; being connected with all that is great and good, holy and beautiful, wise and powerful, in the universe.

3. *The end of such a life.*

"To die is gain."

"It is appointed unto all men once to die." Believers in Christ are by no means exempted. But to them death is the entrance to life—it is the beginning of life: of life without sorrow, without temptation, without sin. Death introduces them to the presence of God, and of the Lamb.

B—T.

LXXXIX.

THE SLEEPER ALARMED.

EPHESIANS v. 14.—"Awake thou that sleepest."

The writers of the sacred Scriptures evince a profound acquaintance with the condition of human nature. They uniformly represent it as fallen, as depraved, and guilty.

I. THE CONDITION OF HUMAN NATURE.

The expression used in the text aptly describes a certain condition of man—a condition which affects not a few individuals of the race only, but the whole of them.

1. *Its moral character.*

Sleep is a state of forgetfulness, of ignorance, and of insensibility; and what man is to the material world in a state of cor-

poreal sleep, that he is to the spiritual world while under the influence of his depraved nature. He is in a state of forgetfulness as to the design of his being, as to the obligation under which he is placed to his great Creator, as to the actual aspect and existing character of his condition, and as to that final and eternal state in which he is to dwell for ever. Besides this, he is insensible to those emotions which ought to animate and control an immortal being. His heart is a heart of stone. That this is the moral character of our natural condition, will be found to be borne out by the testimony of the word of God, and by our own personal experience and observation. The word of God describes man as "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart." Our experience confirms the description.

2. *Its evil consequences.*

Sleep is a state of privation and of insecurity. All in a state of nature are deprived of the Divine favour, and of the various and invaluable blessings which the Divine favour confers. Besides this, they who continue asleep have a fearful prospect before them. They will awake, but it will be to everlasting confusion; they will awake, but it will be to hear the sentence that consigns them to utter woe; they will awake, but it will be to hear, "*Thou shalt sleep no more,*" for henceforth they must lie down in everlasting sorrow.

II. THE IMPRESSIVE CALL.

1. *This call has a great object.*

It is to awake the soul from its lethargy to a full conception of its state, its awful and deplorable state, and to arouse it into action, to secure its deliverance therefrom. The forgetful are to be made alive to eternal realities; the ignorant to be made acquainted with the things that belong to their eternal peace; the insensible to be brought to feel for their soul's welfare, and to enquire the way to everlasting blessedness. To secure this great object, this call is accompanied by the energy of the Holy Spirit. Were it not so, every effort to awaken the soul would be in vain. No human voice can reach the recesses of the heart, and produce commotion there on the subject of eternal things. No human eloquence can awaken from the slumbers of spiritual death. This requires the arm of Omnipotence. "The arm of the Lord" must awake ere man can be made to awake. Human agency is found in this transaction, but it is never found alone; alone it would be powerless: it must be employed, but, to be effectual, it must be accompanied by the Almighty Spirit.

2. *This call is personal.*

It addresses every individual sinner; it is not addressed to sinners in the mass, it is addressed to them as individuals. The preacher has a message from God to thee, sinner—not only to thy neighbour, but to *thee*. Now, do not put it away from thee; do

not be considering how it will apply to this or the other person of thy acquaintance; it is intended for thee. God intends it for thee; Christ intends it for thee; the Holy Spirit, by his present influences on *thy mind*, shows it is for thee. Awake, then, thou sleeper: awake to a sense of *thy* condition; awake to the necessity of *thy* repentance; awake to earnest, instant, energetic effort for *thy* salvation. It is *thy* soul which is at stake; it is *thy* immortal welfare which is in jeopardy; it is *thy* eternal ruin which is certain to take place, unless thou awake.

3. *This call is importunate.*

There ought to be no procrastination. The whole of life is little enough to prepare for eternity; but most of thine has been spent in sleep. O, then, "it is high time to awake out of sleep!" Consider, too, the danger of procrastination, and the increasing difficulty in the way of getting thee awakened. Many efforts have been already made, for a long series of years, to awake thee, but in vain; and is it likely that these efforts will prove more effectual in the future? O no! there is a hardening process going on in thy heart, and each successive Sabbath increases the probability of never awaking thee! Consider, too, that much more of time does not belong to thee. The night of death is advancing with rapid strides upon thy soul. Its approach may be instant. The fact of death is certain; the time of it, how uncertain! Now thou art an inhabitant of earth; to-morrow thou mayest be an inmate of hell!

P.

XC.

THE FULNESS OF GOD DWELLING IN CHRIST.

COLLOSS. ii. 9.—"In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

This is asserted of Jesus Christ. Evidently a most important truth. Let us then examine,

I. THE IMPORT OF THIS ASSERTION.

1. What is the meaning of the phrase, "*All the fulness of the Godhead?*" The original word here rendered *fulness*, signifies that by which any thing is filled, completed, or made perfect. Thus, "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;" where the fulness of the earth signifies all that it contains, or with which it is filled. By the fulness of the Godhead, then, is meant all that the Godhead contains—all the natural and moral attributes of God; every thing which renders the divine nature perfect, or complete. The phrase, all the fulness of the Godhead, consequently means the whole divinity, with its attributes of infinity, eternity, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, holiness, justice, goodness, mercy, faithfulness, and truth. It

cannot possibly mean less, since, if any one attribute were taken away, all the fulness of the Godhead would not remain.

2. What is the meaning of the phrase, "*In him, that is, Christ, dwelleth* all the fulness of the Godhead? There are two Greek words rendered in our version *to dwell*: the first signifies to reside as in a tent or tabernacle, with only a temporary residence: the second signifies to dwell in a house, with a permanent residence. It is the latter word employed in the text. Thus, then, the import of this assertion is,—all the fulness of the Godhead resides in Jesus Christ as in its permanent or fixed habitation.

3. What is the meaning of the phrase, *In him dwelleth* all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*? The word *body* is often used by the sacred writers to denote reality or substance, in contradistinction to shadow or type. Here, too, the word *bodily* appears to signify *substantially* or *really*, intimating that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ, not in a *figurative* or an *apparent*, but in a *real* sense.

From the previous examination the import of the assertion contained in the text appears to be,—the whole Deity, with all its natural and moral attributes, actually resides in Jesus Christ as in a fixed or permanent habitation.

II. CORRESPONDENCE OF THIS IMPORT WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE BIBLE.

1. *The Father and the Spirit are said to dwell in Christ.*

"The Father dwelleth in me, and I in him." "Searching what and what manner of things the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify," is said of the Jewish prophets inspired by the Spirit of God. Now, as the Word is the divine nature of Christ, and as the Father and the Spirit, who with the Word form the whole Godhead, reside in Christ, it follows that the whole Godhead resides in Christ.

2. *Christ is represented as possessing and exercising all the perfections of the Deity.*

"All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made;" therefore he is Almighty. "In him are hid all the treasures of knowledge and of wisdom;" therefore he is omniscient. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst;" therefore he is omnipresent. It follows, therefore, that every natural and moral attribute resides in him.

III. INFERENCES NATURALLY RESULTING FROM THIS IMPORT.

1. *God can be found only in Jesus Christ.*

Man has separated his will from God's will; he is without God in the world. But since the whole Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ, it is in him alone that he can find God, and become re-united with God.

2. *No one can obtain a portion of God's fulness except by applying to Christ.*

Mercy which pardons sin, the peace springing from reconciliation with conscience and God, the strength which resists temptation, the consolation which supports under affliction, the hope of everlasting happiness, all flowing from the fulness of God, can be found only in Jesus Christ.

Application:—

Necessity of possessing faith in Christ as the channel of this fulness. P.

XCL

THE CHRISTIAN'S OBLIGATION TO WALK IN CHRIST.

COL. II. 6.—“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk ye in him.”

The Apostle was greatly attached to Christ and to his cause; he was zealous for the glory of his Master, and for the success of his cause. He knew that both of these objects were intimately connected with the personal holiness of the professed followers of the Lord Jesus; hence he was urgent in pressing and enforcing, by various motives, the claims of Christ to a holy and perfect obedience on the part of his people. In urging this duty, he sometimes addresses their fears by appealing to the “terror of the Lord;” at others, he shows that their happiness, present and future, depends in its degree on their degree of holiness; at others, as in our text, he enforces this duty by appealing to their gratitude.

I. THE PRIVILEGE.

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord.”

They to whom this epistle was addressed, were the professed followers of Christ; they bore his name; they avowed their faith in his death, to which they trusted entirely for salvation. They who thus receive Christ; who believe in him,

1. *Receive him as their Saviour.*

To receive Christ as the Saviour, implies a hearty repentance of sin, and an entire forsaking of it; it implies further, the exercise of faith in his atonement; and the being pardoned, adopted, and regenerated. This privilege is described by the apostle in the most emphatic terms, in the first chapter. “The Father hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

To receive Christ Jesus the Lord, is,

2. *To receive him as King.*

Before this they were aliens, bond-slaves of the devil, led captive by him at his will ; but now they are admitted into the kingdom of God. They pledge themselves to obey its laws, and their obedience to these secures the possession of its privileges. Christ as their King pledges himself to protect them ; and he does so—from the wrath of God, from the enmity of the world, and from the arts and malice of the devil.

It implies,

3. *Personal union with Christ.*

In the 18th verse of the preceding chapter we are taught, that the union between Christ and believers is as intimate as that which subsists between the head and the body. Similar in import to this is the language of Christ's intercessory prayer ; "That they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them." And again, John xv. 4, "Abide in me, and I in you." 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."

II. THE DIRECTION.

"Walk ye in him."

This implies,

1. *That we make an open profession of his name.*

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The one is as essential as the other. He who has received the inestimable blessings connected with personal salvation, will not be slow in declaring the same. The love of Christ will constrain him to sing of mercy and of judgment. And it is necessary and right that he should do so. How is the gospel to be promoted amongst men, but by an open avowal and fellowship on the part of those who are the recipients of its blessings ? It is in vain to expect that name to be found in the Lamb's book of life, which was never enrolled in the book of the church below. Luke xv. 27, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Compare Matt. x. 32-38, xvi. 24 ; Mark viii. 34 ; Luke ix. 23.

2. *Obedience to his commands.*

An entire uniform obedience, a constant progression in holiness, is required from every follower of Christ. The best test of our love to Christ is obedience, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." They that have received Christ Jesus the Lord, ought to show their attachment to him, by continual obedience to his laws, by implicit and entire submission to his will, by active and zealous devotion in his cause. Some of the professed followers of Christ are not careful in this matter ; many things in which their temporal interests are concerned they do, and connive at many things which are at utter variance with the commands of the Lord and Saviour. Instance the *bargaining* in business ; the

asking a high and taking a low price, in buying and selling ; the curtailment of wages, the not giving for labour that to which the labourer is rightly entitled ; besides, in some of the agricultural districts, the wholesale breach of the Sabbath by cheese-making, and other business connected with farming ; these are things constantly done, not only by private members of our body, but also by Class Leaders and Local Preachers ; but it ought not to be. These things will not bear the scrutiny of the great day.

"But our conscience does not condemn us." So much the worse for you. What does that prove ? that you are right ? Nay, verily, you must first prove that you will be judged by your conscience at the last. To the word and to the testimony, "If any man love father or mother, wife or children, house or land, more than me, he is not worthy of me." Be consistent ; give up the doing of these things, or at once abandon your profession of Christ. That individual who is openly opposed to God, will not have so hot a place in hell as the coward hypocrite.

3. *Imitation of his example.*

"He has left us an example that we should walk in his steps." That we may rightly imitate the example of Christ, we ought to acquaint ourselves with the principles by which he was governed, and make them the rule of our own life. There are two things, which, if kept in remembrance, would assist us here : 1. Never to do any thing which we are sure Christ would not do in our circumstances. 2. Never to do any thing that we would not like Christ to find us doing, should he suddenly come to judgment.

III. THE MOTIVE.

1. *There is here an appeal to our gratitude.*

"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord."

We have received him not as our judge ; not to condemn us ; not to inflict upon us much-merited wrath ; but as our Saviour. We have received him, while others are destitute of the knowledge of him ; therefore, we ought to walk in him.

2. *There is here a reference to our obligation.*

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord."

Our acceptance of Christ was voluntary ; he was not forced upon us ; we received him ; we received him, knowing the obligation to obey him ; having received him, we are thereby *pledged to obey him*. We received him as *the Lord* ; not merely as our Saviour.

XCII.

THE PLEASURES THAT ARE AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND.

COLOSSIANS iii. 1.—“Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

While irrational creatures, by the constitution of their nature, are concerned only for the present moment, it is incumbent on man to consider his relationship to a future world, and to prepare for and anticipate its enjoyments, as being those only which are adapted to his wide-ranging capacity and interminable existence. The reality of a future and superior state has been clearly revealed to us, in order to influence our life and conversation.

I. THE SCOPE OF THE EXHORTATION.

“Seek those things that are above.”

The future blessedness, perfection, and glory of believers in heaven, are things to which reference is here made. Similar phraseology to that used in the text, is employed by the Psalmist to describe the glory and happiness of heaven. “At thy right hand there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.” Of the nature of those pleasures we can form no just, no appropriate conception, without the light of the revelation with which God has favoured us; nor can we attain a vivid apprehension of them, even with its aid, unless our minds are enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Amongst the “things that are above,” which the believer is commanded to seek, we may notice,

1. *The perfection of character which they will exhibit there.*

The believer experiences now a salvation from sin; a salvation perfect in its kind, but attended with many frailties, weaknesses, and imperfections. But in heaven all this will be done away with; there will be nothing there to mar or blemish the beauty of those who are emphatically said to be “his jewels.”

2. *The exercises in which they shall be engaged.*

Heaven is imagined by many to be a scene of inactivity; but such an idea is not to be obtained from the Scriptures. They every where speak of the employments of heaven, and speak of them in the most exalted terms. Its service is the service of God; then it will be continual; it will be active; it will be varied.

3. *The happiness of which they will participate.*

All the enjoyments of the children of God on earth afford but a faint emblem of the bliss of heaven. The saints in the upper sanctuary are perfectly happy, because they are perfectly holy. Here they taste of the streams, there they will drink at the fountain. Here they obtain an occasional glimpse of the glories of the celestial country, there they will possess them. Here they

have many a troubled day, many a sorrowful hour ; but there all sorrow and sighing will be done away, and the redeemed will be crowned with gladness and everlasting joy.

4. *The friendships they shall share there.*

Man is made for society. Place him in solitude, and he pines away. In heaven he will be surrounded with the multitudes of the redeemed, all having the like tastes, having the same habits, possessing the same character, engaged in the same service. The friendships of heaven will be worth forming ; for there will be collected the wise, the good, the great, from every region of the universe. They will be worth forming ; for they will be enduring. Nothing can disturb the harmony which will subsist there. "Its people shall be all righteous."

II. THE DUTY INCUMBENT UPON US.

"*Seek those things.*"

1. *This supposes belief of them.*

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for." Before we can attend to the exhortation, we must be thoroughly satisfied in our minds of the reality of unseen things. We must have a faith in their existence, which is of the operation of God. We must be tremblingly alive to their importance.

2. *Attention ought to be directed towards them.*

There must be frequent thoughts of them ; the bias of the mind must be towards them. Every thing else must receive its colouring from this ; the prevailing hue of the mind must be heavenly. Every thing else ought to be held in subservience to this. We ought to be occupied, so as to quit gladly, at a moment's warning, for the better and enduring inheritance.

3. *Our affections ought to be set on them.*

To the true believer this world is a desert, dry and barren. For it he ought to have no liking, but all his preferences should be directed upwards. As a traveller over a sandy region to a pleasant land would not allow his affections to linger round his toilsome way, but would have them fixed on that place to which he was hastening ; so thus the believer, travelling over this wilderness world, will not permit his affections to rest upon it, but will have them centred in his home, and in his God.

4. *Diligent and persevering exertions in order to attain them.*

This implies that we use the means which are prescribed in Scripture, and observe the ordinances which have been instituted by our Lord and Master, as helps on the way to heaven. Faith, prayer, reading of the word, social and public worship, with the cultivation of the dispositions which are essential to their right performance, are amongst the means which ought to be used to this end.

III. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH WE OUGHT TO BE IMPELLED TO THIS.

"Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

1. *A regard to consistency of conduct.*

The Christian is the professed follower of Christ ; to be con-

sistent, then, he ought to aim continually to secure an inheritance in the presence and service of Christ.

2. *The present advantages which result from it.*

By a wise appointment of God, duty and interest are joined, and as we attend to the one, so the other will be promoted. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." Religion is our life even now. If the thoughts and affections are set on things above, worldly prosperity will not greatly elevate, nor worldly adversity much depress; the one will not intoxicate, the other will not destroy.

3. *Because they are the scene in which Christ dwells.*

It is the presence of Christ in heaven, that will make it so rich a heaven to you. To be with the Lord is the pre-eminent desire of every follower of Christ. This desire increases in proportion to the enjoyment of present fellowship with the Lord.

"And if our fellowship below
In Jesus be so sweet,
What heights of rapture shall we know
When round his throne we meet!"

B—T.

XCIII.

CHRIST OUR LIFE.

COLOSSIANS iii. 4.—"Christ our life."

The union which subsists between Christ and his followers is set forth in the Scriptures by various metaphors. Sometimes to represent the nearness of this union, it is illustrated by that which subsists between the vine and its branches. Sometimes the figure of a foundation is employed, on which is reared the temple of Zion, "living stones" forming the material. Sometimes Christ is spoken of as the head, and his people the body. In our text he is said to be "our life."

I. HE IS SO RELATIVELY.

Our natural state, in consequence of transgression, is one of death. The sentence of condemnation is recorded against all of us; in the eye of that law which we have broken, we are actually dead. This is our state. We are doomed to death; there remains but the execution of the sentence to complete our woe. In this state Christ found us, and became "our life," by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. Here was the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, by means of which God may be just, and the justifier of the believer in Jesus. It will be seen that our life does not flow from our obedience, "Not by works of righteousness

which we have done:" nor from our repentance—for this, though becoming our situation, does not alter our relation, it does not atone—our life flows from the atonement by Jesus Christ alone. In order to obtain this life, this justification, we must lay hold of the atonement by faith. Faith in the death of Christ, is the instrument by which we obtain the justification of which he is the Author.

II. CHRIST IS OUR LIFE ACTUALLY.

We are not only dead in law, but we are dead by alienation from him who is the life of the universe. Sin has not only exposed us to future misery, the punishment has already begun. We are already in a state of separation from God. With him we have no communion, and before we can have, there must be restoration to purity, a creating anew. The death of Christ has procured this for us. In producing this life, this sanctification, the death of Christ is the cause, the Holy Spirit the agent, the Word is the instrument, and the purity of Christ the model and rule.

1. *Christ is the life of all Christian graces.*

These proceed from and lead to Christ. *Faith* cannot possibly exist without Christ to rest on. It cannot rest on joyous feelings, or consistent conduct; these are the fruits, not the ground of faith. Faith gives life to good works, to holy tempera, to joyful affections; but Christ must first be the life of faith. Christ is the life of hope. If we have hope it is because we are quickened together with him; it is because he has entered within the veil. Christ is the life of our love. He has been the object of supreme regard in every age, to every genuine Christian; the strength of their love has been according to their knowledge.

2. *Christ is the life of Christian duties.*

This is another important branch of practical godliness. Where are these duties not attended to? Where Christ is not the life of the soul. If Christians are what they ought to be, if their conversation be holy, if their actions be holy; they are so because Christ is their life and their strength.

3. *He is the life of Christian ordinances.*

Christian graces will not be maintained with vigour, Christian duties will not be performed with regularity, if we do not continue to implore and to enjoy the Divine influence through the medium of the means of grace. Of all these ordinances Christ is the life. They would be wells without water, if he were not conveyed through them in his spiritual and comforting influences. What are sacraments without Christ? They draw all their efficacy from him. What are prayers or thanksgivings without Christ? Is he not the chief object of supplication in the one, and the reason of the acceptance of the other? What is preaching without Christ? If Christ be not the subject of it, there is no gospel in it. He is the principal theme of evangelical administrations. If we preach the law, it is to shew you your need of

Christ. If we preach the torments of hell, it is to induce you to make haste to Christ. If we preach the joys of heaven, it is to encourage you to go to Christ. But he is not only the subject of our preaching, but our authority to preach is derived immediately from him; and from him is derived the power to exercise the ministry with effect.

III. CHRIST IS OUR LIFE IN THE PROMISE OF THE RESURRECTION TO FUTURE GLORY.

Although the Spirit is life because of righteousness, without the life-giving power of Christ the body remains dead because of sin. This will be but for a time; for the body itself will be raised from the grave, and will put on immortality. It will be effected by the power of Christ. He himself will perform this miracle. His body will be the model to which the bodies of his people will be conformed. His appearance in the clouds will be the signal for our resurrection.

We may observe, further, that Christ may be termed "our life," because it is through him that admission is obtained to heaven; that by him each saint will have his place and occupation assigned in heaven; that his presence constitutes the bliss of heaven; and that the degree of glory will be regulated by the degrees of nearness and intimacy with Christ to which we may have been previously exalted.

In conclusion, let us endeavour to apply this subject,

1. *To hearers of the gospel.*

Christ is preached to the end that he may be your life. You cannot listen attentively to the gospel without deriving light, but this will avail you nothing, unless you receive life also; nay, it will add to your condemnation.

2. *To earnest seekers of salvation.*

Go at once to Christ with your burden of guilt, and he will remove it; go with your depraved nature, and he will create it anew.

3. *To Christians.*

Be grateful. See how much you owe to Christ. He died that you might have life, and you now live through him. Be consistent, as well as grateful. Live to Christ. Identify yourselves with all that belongs to him; his cause must be yours, his people yours. Be useful. Lay yourselves out to bring others to him; diffuse the savour of his life-giving death.

B,

XCIV.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

1 THESSALONIANS V. 10.—“Who died for us.”

The event to which the text refers is the most remarkable of any that ever transpired in the universe. It was that in which the fierce anger of God burned out against sin, and against his own Son, who had become the sinner's substitute. Had it not been for this event, no day of salvation would ever have dawned on this ruined world; no gospel would ever have been proclaimed to ruined men.

In directing our attention to the death of Christ, there are two circumstances which have a special claim to our notice.

I. ITS CHARACTER.

1. *It was a violent death.*

By violent we mean that his life was not legally forfeited. No charge of guilt could be proved against him; his enemies would gladly have done so; they suborned false witnesses, yet they failed to effect their object, according to the testimony of their own corrupt judge, who was by no means inclined to view the matter impartially; he declared Christ *innocent*. “He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation, for he was *cut off* from the land of the living?” Nor was his life forfeited to the Divine law, for we have Divine authority for asserting that Christ knew no sin.

2. *It was a voluntary death.*

It has been said, the death of Christ was the necessary result of his engagement to teach a new and better system of morals, and it is therefore to be looked upon in no other light than that of a martyr. The Scriptures furnish no ground for this supposition. According to them, no means would have been attended with success, however well devised, and however energetically executed, but for the co-operation of the Saviour. A little while before his death, he was at a distance from Jerusalem, and his enemies knew not where; they had organized their plans, and Christ was quite aware of it, yet he went up boldly to Jerusalem, to be, as he said, “delivered into the hands of the priests and scribes, and to suffer many things from them.” Again, while on his way from Gethsemane, when one of his disciples drew out a sword in his behalf, he told him that he could summon twelve legions of angels to his assistance. But we do not base our proof of the voluntary character of his death on any incidents of this kind, but on the constitution of his person. Jesus Christ possesses the Divine nature, with its inseparable and essential attributes; he also possesses human nature; the two natures are mysteriously joined in his person. Now it is evident,

that to occasion death to the person of Jesus Christ, would require the exercise of infinite power; it follows, then, that the death of Christ was not the result of human agency, but was eminently voluntary. Of course, this does not at all diminish the guilt of those who conspired against him; though deficient in power, they wanted not the will.

3. *It was severe.*

Supposing that his death was merely that of a martyr, we are still at a loss to account for its severity. We do not now refer to those sufferings in which his body was the subject, but to that excessive mental but mysterious suffering, to which he refers in those words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" sufferings so severe, that they led him "with strong cryings and tears" to pray that this cup might pass from him.

4. *It was substitutionary.*

It is evident from the considerations now presented, that the death of Christ was of a peculiar kind; there never had been a case like it, in which one has suffered death, on whom could be charged no crime, in whom could be found no sin. Christ was the substitute of the sinner; he undertook to make expiation for human transgression, and against him, in the stead of man, was directed the flaming sword of Almighty wrath, of avenging justice. Even as a man Christ died as a substitute; by the common consent of the people, he was a substitute for Barabbas, a notorious robber and murderer.

II. ITS DESIGN.

In many passages of scripture, the death of Christ is set forth as sacrificial; and one of the principal designs of the epistle to the Hebrews is to show, that the ritual ceremonies and typical services of the Mosaic economy were of no value, and utterly unmeaning, only so far as they shadowed forth the "one sacrifice for sins now made in the end of the world." The design of all sacrifice is twofold,—to procure pardon, and, by the moral influence on the offender, to secure obedience. This is the design of the death of Christ.

1. *To procure pardon.*

Pardon is the removal of the penal consequences of transgression. The pardon of a sinner under the Divine government, is granted either as a mere act of prerogative, or else on account of some valuable consideration, presented to the offended majesty of heaven, by which his justice is satisfied, the honour of his government vindicated, and the authority of his law secured.

There are some that maintain that pardon is a mere act of prerogative with God. They who maintain this, are placed in a dilemma from which it appears impossible to escape. The penalty threatened against sin is everlasting death; now, either the circumstances of the case required that such a threatening should be uttered, or they did not. If they did, then the same circumstances

required that the penalty be inflicted in case of transgression, or what becomes of the truth of God? If they did not, then where was the wisdom of not adopting proper means to secure the end proposed? This consideration alone is sufficient to show, that sin cannot be pardoned as a mere act of prerogative.

Others maintain that sin ought to be pardoned on the repentance of the sinner. Repentance is either in the power of man, or it is not; if it be in his power, it will be exercised whenever he may fear punishment, and thus he would, on this supposition, always escape. But, if it be not in his own power; if, as the Scriptures teach, all genuine repentance is the gift of God,—were this doctrine true, it would follow that God assists man to break his own law. But, apart from this, it is evident that repentance alters not the relation between the parties; it does not destroy the fact of transgression; it can never of itself do away with the necessity for punishment.

The Scriptures teach us that pardon is bestowed on the sinner on account of the death of Christ. This is that valuable consideration by which the ends of the Divine government are secured, and yet the penalty averted from the soul of the sinner. From the design of the Mosaic economy, from many of the predictions of the prophets, and from the statements of the New Testament, we learn that this was the character of our Lord's death. The Mosaic economy was typical; its rites and ceremonies, sacrifices and offerings, were but shadows of things to come. The prophets speak of the sword "smiting the man who is Jehovah's fellow;" of the "Father putting him to grief," and laying on him "our iniquities." All those passages in the New Testament which declare that this life was given as a "ransom," that he died "for the ungodly," that "through him" we receive pardon, that in "his blood" we have redemption; all these passages bring out the same great truth, that the design of the death of Christ was to open the way for the pardon of the sinner.

2. To secure obedience.

The death of Christ has a twofold aspect. It was not only designed to procure our pardon, it was intended to produce such an impression upon us, that, from choice, we should live in obedience to the Divine law. God hates sin; he hates it, for it is inseparably connected with misery; and he inflicts positive evil in order to prevent the commission of sin. All the manifestations of wrath which have been made by the Divine Being, have been intended as warnings against sin. In the deluge, there was a sermon against sin, the imprint of which is found on every mountain and in every valley on the surface of our earth. The destruction of the cities of the plain was a fearful warning against sin; but there never was such a manifestation of the hatefulness of sin, of God's hatred of it, as in the sufferings of his Son at Gethsemane and Calvary.

Let us, by way of application, look at the lessons inculcated by this subject.

1. *It has lessons for the believer.*

To him it brings security; security from the wrath of God. "You are not appointed unto wrath, but to obtain salvation." It contains motives to watchfulness. Did your salvation from sin, and the curse, require Christ to die, and will you not watch every approach of evil, and check it in the bud?

2. *It has lessons for the impenitent.*

Here you are taught the infinite importance of that salvation which you make so light of; here is exhibited the value of that soul which never has a moment of your concern; here you may see the ineffable folly, and the infinite danger, of neglecting so great salvation. If sin were so severely punished in the person of our substitute, who was God's dear Son, how much sorer punishment does he deserve who neglects this Saviour.

XCV.

GODLINESS PROFITABLE UNTO ALL THINGS.

1 TIM. iv. 8. — "But godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

It is important to have correct views of religion, especially in the present day, when religion is made to consist in a mere attendance on a round of ceremonies; and when men are taught that salvation and its concomitant blessings are only to be had through a certain "succession," and in attendance upon a certain form of worship.

I. THE TRUE NATURE OF GODLINESS.

1. *True godliness commences with a knowledge of God.*

Not a mere theoretical knowledge, but an actual and experimental knowledge; a knowledge of him as the God of pardon, as the God of adoption, as the God of sanctification. Nothing but this constitutes true godliness. Men may have many just notions concerning the nature and attributes of God, the principles of his government, the future state of rewards and punishment; but no knowledge of this kind makes a man godly, unless his feelings, habits, and life are moulded and formed by it. The minds of men may be clear as moonshine, and their hearts as cold.

2. *True godliness is characterised by obedience to the Divine command.*

"Repentance towards God" is the first act of obedience required from him who wishes to form a godly character. "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ" is the next step in true obedience; love to

God and man, is the consummation of the whole—a love that is undying, a love that pervades the whole being of its subject, a love that rises in the soul, and flows in all the actions of life, a love that rises to God, and flows out on man.

3. *True godliness is marked by the possession of likeness to God.*

We are made partakers of a "divine nature." We are "new creatures." "Old things pass away, all things become new." The heart is changed; the whole character is transformed; former habits are broken up, and new ones formed. He who was before "earthly, sensual, and devilish," "beholding," as he now does, "as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

II. THE WORTH OF GODLINESS.

Who can tell its real value? The apostle informs us, that it "is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

1. *It is profitable for the present.*

It secures a great deal of worldly comfort; it brings a great deal of peace to the mind; it saves from much distress of conscience; it is the promoter of social enjoyment; it saves from family jars and strife; in a word, if you want real happiness, within and without, at home and abroad, you must get true godliness. Godliness is profitable for the present, inasmuch as it establishes respectability of character in the world. The godly man is an honest man—then he is fit for situations of trust; the godly man is a sober man—then you may entrust, without fear, life and property into his hands; the godly man is a man of truth—then you may depend upon him in your business transactions; the godly man is a diligent man—then he requires less personal inspection, for he is not given to "eye-service, as a man-pleaser."

2. *It is profitable for the future.*

Possessed of this, you are secure from the pains of hell; possessed of this, you have averted from you the wrath and curse of God; possessed of this, you are entitled to eternal life. It has the promise of the life to come. The present is the valley of the shadow of death; it can scarcely be called life, it has but the glimmering of existence, but the future *is* life. Life *commences* in heaven, commences never to terminate; it will be always life possessed, and yet life to come.

M.

XCVI.

HEED NECESSARY TO YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

1 TIM. IV. 16.—“Take heed unto thyself.”

This was the counsel of Paul, after a life of some length and of great experience, to a young man who had just entered on the ministry of the gospel. He had no reason to question the piety of his young friend; but he saw a stormy sea around him, and knew the hidden reefs and shoals upon which many had made shipwreck, and from which care is necessary to preserve the most holy.

Do you think that this caution is less applicable to each of us, and especially to those who are young in the Christian life, and whose days, moreover, are not to be spent as those of Timothy were, “in meditation and reading, in exhortation and doctrine,” but in the less congenial atmosphere of this world’s business? To them it is peculiarly applicable.

“Take heed unto thyself.”

I. THAT THY HOPES ARE WELL FOUNDED.

A profession of religion can now be very easily made. It costs a man nothing now to avow himself a follower of Christ. He may be far from a hypocrite, far from a deceiver. Yet his religion may be an affair of mere imitation: composed of ideas and habits which he has derived from intercourse with Christians. He may never have had his will subdued, nor his heart changed. Cry therefore unto God, that he may show thee what thou art.

II. THAT THERE BE A STEADY PROGRESS IN HOLINESS.

Much is to be done in ourselves. We must keep back nothing from him who gave himself for us. No exception can be admitted in favour of any habit, affection, or action which is contrary to his will. Old sins will struggle desperately for the mastery; but we must not be terrified. In proportion to our faith, shall be our superiority to them. He who performeth all things for us, is on our side; and diligence and watchfulness in his strength will enable us to keep a “conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.”

III. THAT THERE BE AN IMPROVEMENT IN ALL NATURAL GIFTS.

The entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple. It is the effect of true religion to incite the mind to fresh acquisitions. But this instinct is often repressed. It is grievous to find some Christians just where they were years after their conversion. Their views of the word of God are as confused as ever. It is shameful for young Christians to be satisfied with poring over the news of the day, and perusing trivial and frivolous publications. Christ demands of his people

diligent cultivation of their minds. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."

IV. THAT THERE BE LABOUR TO PROMOTE THE GOOD OF THE WORLD.

There are Christians who are not active: active men perhaps, but not active Christians. If they began their career on this principle, it will be difficult to change them. Therefore, young Christians, begin right. Begin at once with what lies nearest to you. Do not suppose you have no capacity; if you have not, you can acquire one. Every thing calls for exertion, and the voice of Christ is heard joining with every thing in the call. There is no welfare for the soul without this.

V. THAT THE ATTENTION BE FIXED ON THE GREAT REALITIES OF ETERNITY.

It is the habit of viewing eternity which makes the great part of the difference between the Christian and the man of the world. 2 COR. iv. 17. 18. Try every thing by that standard. If asked to form a friendship, to enter a situation, to perform a service, to bear a trial, to seek a pleasure—first place it, in thought, before the judgment-seat. The ancient artist derived much of his success from the idea, which he somewhat presumptuously expressed, "I paint for eternity;" it is the plain truth to the Christian, "I live for eternity."

ADDRESS:—

1. The aged Christian.
2. The ungodly.

XCVII.

THE PRIESTLY CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

HEB. i. 1-3.—God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

This epistle owes its origin to the objections which were urged by the Jews against the claims and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews objected to the claims put forth by Christ. They were not at all disposed to admit, for instance, that he was the Son of God; it formed no article of their belief, that their expected Messiah would be divine; they expected a mere man, who would establish a mere temporal kingdom. Now, it is the design of the apostle in this epistle to show, that every thing

which Jesus Christ claimed to be, was predicted of the Messiah; or, in other words, it is his design to show, from the rites and ceremonies, statements and predictions, of their own Scriptures, that the Messiah when he came must put forth similar claims to those of Jesus of Nazareth, bear the same character, and die a similar death; so that, if they reject the Lord Jesus Christ on account of his claims and character, they must, on the same grounds, reject the idea of a Messiah altogether. The apostle incontrovertibly proves, therefore, that they must either abandon their opposition to Jesus Christ, or they must abandon their belief in a Divine revelation; they must either receive Jesus as the Christ, or they must give up all hope of a Messiah. This is the *design* of the epistle. It was not written merely to evince the superiority of Christianity to Judaism. Who can conceive that the apostle Paul, having proved, in the first chapter, that the Author of Christianity was God's own Son, would go on through the greater portion of the epistle to show that he was superior to angels, Moses and Aaron? Having proved him to be God, his superiority to every *created* being follows as a matter of course. No; the great design of the epistle is to show, that, according to the whole tenor of Divine Revelation, the Messiah was to be, do, and suffer, just precisely what Jesus of Nazareth was, did, and suffered; so that one who rejected him, might as well reject all revelation, inasmuch as there is a perfect agreement between the statements of the one, and the claims, and character, and life of the other. Who can tell the force with which such an argument would come home to the mind of a Jew? Must it not shut him up to the conclusion that he must either believe in Christ, or be lost everlastingly? Or else, that he must abandon his most cherished hopes, and avow his disbelief in the authority of that book which he had always been accustomed to consider as the Book of God?

Our text is an epitome of the whole, comprising, in as brief a statement as possible, those great truths respecting the Messiah, which he afterwards illustrates and proves by citations from the scriptures of the Old Testament.

We have,

I. THE ASSERTION OF A GREAT FACT.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

This fact embraces,

1. *The progress and completion of Divine Revelation.*

The design of all revelation from God to man has been to throw light around the question, how man, a sinner, could be reconciled to God. How profound the gloom in which men's minds have been enveloped on this subject, in all ages, in those places which the light of revelation has never penetrated! Men,

in every age and place, have felt the need of some mode of reconciliation. They have sacrificed their children, tortured their bodies, have passed through inconceivable suffering, in order to propitiate the Deity. The first ray of light which was thrown into the midst of this dense gloom, was the sentence respecting "the seed of the woman." Yet how feeble its glimmerings! how indistinct its intimations! and, as ages rolled away, how slowly did it increase! The subject was always surrounded by shadows; always set forth by symbols; and, even when the prophetic light was lifted in the sanctuary, even then, "Clouds and darkness were the habitation of his throne." But now that Christ has come, this subject is set at rest for ever; by him "life and immortality" were brought to light. In him former revelations, together with their types, ceremonies, and symbols, are perceived to have a meaning and an end, of which those to whom they were given appear to have had no conception.

2. *The dignity of its author.*

It is worthy of remark, that Paul boldly claims at the outset the *same* origin for Judaism and Christianity, and by this appeals to the Scriptures of the one for the proof of the truth of the other. From comparing some passages in the gospel together, we find that one stumbling-block to the Jews was the claims which Christ urged, that he was the Son of God. Now Paul asserts at once, that God has made a revelation "in these last days by his Son;" he then proceeds in a strain of argumentation, the most splendid, the most powerful, and the most convincing, to prove from the Jewish Scriptures, that God had a Son; * that this Son was to come into the world; † that he was to be the Messiah; ‡ that he was to possess a human nature, § and that as man || he was to have universal empire; and then having done this, having from the Jewish Scriptures proved that these particulars were to meet in the character of the Messiah; he then, in the 9th verse of the second chapter, for the first time, introduces the *name* of Christ, and applies the whole to him.

Now from these citations it is evident, that the very things which the Jews objected to in the claims of the Lord Jesus, were to meet together in the character and person of the Christ; and as there had been no one that had ever put forth claims like his, claims corresponding with the predictions, it behoved them to look into the evidence of their reality, especially as additional proof had been given in "signs and wonders, with divers miracles."

The author of Christianity, the bringer in "of a better hope," is here most convincingly proved to be God. No argument in the whole compass of revelation, furnishes a proof so strong as this of these first and second chapters of this epistle.

* Chap. i. 5.

† Chap. i. 6.

‡ Chap. i. 7-14.

§ Chap. ii. 5-8.

|| Chap. ii. 7.

II. THE STATEMENT OF A GREAT TRUTH.

"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

These words assert the perfection of the priestly character of Christ. They bring before us,

1. *His qualifications.*

Divine appointment is an essential requisite to the performance of the priestly office. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," also said, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Our text implies a beautiful distinction betwixt the Aaronic priesthood and that of our Saviour. The Jews boasted that their high priest received his appointment from, and performed his office in the presence of, that Divine appearance, which in the Old Testament is termed the "glory of the Lord;" but our high priest is the "glory of the Lord" himself; he who appointed the Aaronic priesthood is now the priest. He is the "brightness of his glory."

Personal purity is another essential qualification. This did not belong to the Aaronic priesthood; "they needed daily to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins." The personal purity of our high priest is set forth in our text by two most expressive figures. When the inspired writers wish to impress us with the idea of the purity of the Divine nature, they compare God to light. "God is light." Taking up the same figure, the apostle asserts that Christ is the "brightness of the Father's glory." Another mode of expression used by the inspired writers to convey the idea of holiness of character, as for instance, in the creation of man, is to compare it to the "image of God." As the apostle, employing the same figure, says, that our high priest is the "express image of the Father's person." This passage furnishes material for building up a splendid argument for the divinity of the Saviour's person; but its chief design is to set forth his personal qualifications for the arduous work of reconciling the world to God.

Perpetuity is another qualification.

The Aaronic priesthood was a type of the Saviour's, that passed from the father to son; the office was perpetuated, although they that exercised it died. But Christ is a priest for ever, "without father, without mother." The same mode of representation is adopted elsewhere, where Christ is said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; but if he has been a sacrifice, he has also been a priest; and he continueth a priest for ever.

2. *The nature and perfection of his sacrifice.*

"By himself purged our sins."

One peculiarity about the priesthood of Christ is, that he was at once the priest, the sacrifice, and the altar. The sacrifice was his human nature; his soul was poured out unto death. His Divine nature was the altar, by which he was enabled to bear the entire load of sorrow, and to drain the cup of expiation to the dregs. It is this which stamps his atonement with infinite value.

(1.) *The sacrifice of Christ was for sins.*

For sins; on account of sins; in consequence of sins. His sufferings were punitive—wrath came on him to the uttermost in the day of God's fierce anger.

"The Lord in the day
Of his anger, did lay
Our sins on the Lamb."

The sword of Almighty justice awaked against the man that was Jehovah's fellow. Before this, that sword had slumbered; it had been spread over the world in the deluge; it was seen by the cities of the plain; but never was it fully awake, never was its power fully felt, till it fell, guided and moved by an Almighty hand, on him who was the best beloved of the Father.

(2.) *It was substitutionary.*

It was for "our sins." "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." The misery which had been distributed into many cups, was all collected into his, and he drained it to the dregs. He "tasted death for every man." Like streams meeting together at the edge of a precipice, and falling down in an overwhelming cataract, the punishment deserved by every sinner, and due to every sin, fell in a torrent of bitterest woe upon his soul.

(3.) *It was perfect.* "Purged our sins."

As this epistle was addressed to those that were perfectly acquainted with the terms and ceremonies of the law, the idea conveyed by this term would be that the death of Christ made atonement for sin. This atonement was made by himself; others offered the blood of bulls and of goats, but he with his own blood obtained eternal redemption for us. It was by himself *alone*. No one assisted him in the mighty undertaking; "he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there were none with him." It *purged* our sins; took them away. Salvation is therefore available to every sinner of our race. They that perish, perish for rejecting Christ; the ground of their condemnation is the not believing in his name; the amount of their punishment may be ordered according to their sins, but the reason is their rejection of Christ.

3. *His exaltation.*

"Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

By this was intimated,

(1.) *That his sacrifice was accepted.*

When the high priest under the law entered into the holy place, he had to perform the duty standing; he did not presume, nor was he permitted, to sit down in the meanest place, much less take up his position on the right hand of the "glory of the Lord." But Christ, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins, "for ever sat down on the right hand of God." This position shows that the Father is well pleased with his sacrifice. "Therefore he hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."

(2.) *It exhibits his interest in the welfare of his church and people.*

When he had purged our sins, he did not lay aside his human nature, but took it with him to appear in the presence of God for us. From the position he now occupies, he bestows all the blessings that he has purchased with his blood. And so long as he retains the position we are secure; while he is there, his Spirit and gospel are here. He sits "at the right hand of God," that he may take and present to him every one that approaches the throne of grace in his name. We are not to conceive that because he is exalted he forgets us in our low estate. Oh no! Though surrounded with the glories of heaven, he never can forget the groans of Gethsemane or the sufferings of Calvary. Every thing in heaven reminds him of the sacrifice he accomplished at Jerusalem. The land of glory is filled with the fragrance of his sacrifice, and the robes of the redeemed are stained with his blood.

(3.) *It is a pledge of future glory.*

He sits there till his gospel has subdued every thing to himself. He sits there as a token that all his redeemed shall share in his triumphs, and through eternity celebrate his praise.

XCVIII.

THE DANGER OF NEGLECT OF SALVATION.

HEBREWS II. 1-3.—"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

While the Book of God regards the whole mass of mankind as exposed to the wrath of God, it nevertheless makes a distinction respecting the present guilt and future portion of the individuals composing it. Some are the subjects of greater condemnation, and will meet with a heavier punishment, than others. Not because their sins are more numerous, but because their advantages have been greater. On this subject the Bible contains doc-

trines quite at variance with the common opinions. In its estimate of guilt it is far removed from the opinions and estimate of the world. According to commonly received opinions, he is the most deserving of severer punishment who violates the decencies of life, or outrages the wellbeing of society; but the Bible teaches us, that you who are remarkable for every thing that is honourable and virtuous among men, are equally deserving of this greater condemnation. Why? Because there has been made known to you a plan of saving mercy, which you have treated as a thing of no account—a thing in which *you* are in no way interested; you are thus guilty of offering to God the greatest insult in your power, at the same time that you commit the greatest sin in the universe, that of “despising the riches of his goodness and forbearance.”—Rom. ii. 4.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS GREAT SALVATION.

The term implies deliverance from imminent danger, Exodus xiv. 13; but in the text, it includes all that God has done for man's salvation. For this reason it is described as “so great salvation.” It deserves this epithet, whether we look at the blessings offered, the way in which they were procured, or the mode in which they are applied.

That it is a great salvation, is seen,

1. *In the blessings offered.*

(1.) Here is provided and offered to the acceptance of every man, a free, full, present and everlasting pardon for all past sin. Listen to our Lord, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, that repentance and remission of sins might be preached in his name.” Listen to Peter, “Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, by turning away every one of you from his iniquities;”—and again, “Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins.”

Pardon includes deliverance from all the misery which sin has entailed upon us. Sin is misery. It and misery are inseparable: God has so constituted us that we cannot sin and remain happy. Every man is laden with a burden of guilt, and every man is wretched under his burden. It is true that all do not know the cause of their misery; and there are others who deny its existence; but it is nevertheless fact. Every man, would he but let his feelings have play, would cry out, “O wretched man that I am!” Not that every man is wretched because he feels himself a sinner. “Happy, O how happy! exclaims the Psalmist, “is the man whose sin is covered, whose iniquity is forgiven.”

Pardon includes the removal of the displeasure of God; it turns aside the stroke of Divine justice; it removes the condemnation of the broken law. There hangs over the pathway of every sinner the cloud of God's wrath: laden with the thunder of his vengeance, it stretches over the entire of the sinner's existence;

whichever way he turns his eye, there is no opening, no escape; but pardon admits him into another path—a path illuminated by the smile of God's countenance—a path cheered by God's presence—a path ending in eternal glory.

(2.) This salvation secures inestimable privileges. The pardoned are adopted into the family of God; they were aliens, they are now children; they were enemies, they are now friends. To them belongs the high destination of being "brethren with Christ," "heirs of God," "partakers of the Divine nature," "temples of the Holy Ghost." To them belongs the hope of future glory.

2. *The manner in which this salvation was procured.*

To such blessings as these we have neither right nor claim. The justice, truth, and holiness of God required that the sentence of condemnation should be inflicted upon us. But in the plan of redemption, these attributes harmonize with the exercise of mercy. God set his heart on saving us, and he has done it in a way which manifests his truth, exhibits his justice, and declares his holiness, at the same time that it opens the way for the exercise of mercy. It required, however, that his own Son should die, "and he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."

3. *The mode of its application.*

The death of Christ has provided salvation for man; it has made it safe, and just, and honourable for God to forgive sin. Christ has thrown an archway across the gulf of separation; he has opened the way for reconciliation with God. But although thus much is done, the work is yet but half accomplished. Men are not only guilty, they are also depraved; not only exposed to the wrath of God, but "dead in trespasses and sins." A bridge is thrown across the gulf of separation, but men lie on this side of it, dead. God has published the amnesty of forgiveness, but men retain their hostile position. Before this salvation is available by him, he must lay down the weapons of his rebellion, and submit himself to God. How is this to be done? How is the obduracy of his will to be subdued? How is he to be empowered and made willing to yield himself to God? Now herein is seen the greatness of this salvation, and the greatness of the love which contrived it. The Holy Spirit is given by the Father and the Son, and he himself voluntarily undertakes to bring men to repent, believe, and be saved. The plan of salvation, then, comprises two great gifts by God to the world. His Son, to make atonement and carry on the work of intercession; and his Spirit, to bring men into the possession of the blessings provided. The Holy Spirit, is ever at work personally, and by various instrumentality, to bring men to God. No sinner can of himself repent and believe; to do either the one or the other, he must be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Now, if this be the case, how great their folly who

put off the day of repentance—put it off to a period when the Spirit may not assist them.

II. OUR DUTY RESPECTING THE GREAT SALVATION.

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard."

1. *You should make yourselves fully acquainted with what the Bible teaches on the nature, and necessity, and way of attaining salvation.*

You should seriously consider what has been taught us by God in his word, concerning our state, condition, and character.

2. *You must practise the duties enjoined upon us.*

These are, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. You ought *now* to repent; now that you feel that it is your duty; now that you have the opportunity. You ought to repent now that you have never repented before. You ought to humble yourselves now before God.

3. *You must do this earnestly.*

You ought to show the sincerity of your sorrow by your earnestness in seeking salvation. If the mariner sees in the western sky the signs of an approaching storm, how anxiously does he put his vessel in the best condition he can to meet it; what earnest heed does he give that his life shall not be placed in jeopardy, for any thing that he can do. Oh, show a similar anxiety for your salvation! Look to that point of your compass which bears on the end of life, and you will see gathering there thick clouds of darkness, which are but the forerunners of an eternal storm. Go on! heedless and careless, and you will soon be left to encounter the tempest in the ocean of God's wrath, without chart, compass, helm, or shore.

III. THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THIS DUTY IS URGED.

On what grounds do we urge you not to neglect salvation?

1. *Because of the dignity of the Author of salvation.*

"THEREFORE we ought to give the more earnest heed."

This is a conclusion drawn from the statements and reasoning of the preceding chapter. In that chapter the voice of the Father addressing the Author of this salvation, says, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." "Thy throne O God is for ever and ever." Such is the language addressed to him who became man and died, that you might be saved from hell.

2. *Because having heard the gospel you are placed under additional responsibility.*

"The things which we have heard."

Our existence has been cast in a land of gospel light. No plea can be urged that we are ignorant of our condition, and of the means of safety. We have been made acquainted with the things which belong to our peace.

3. *Because there is a danger of these things slipping from you.*

"Lest at any time you let them slip."

These words intimate that it is a difficult thing to make an impression on the mind. The pouring of truth on the mind of the sinner is like pouring water into a leaking vessel—it runs out as fast as it runs in. The reason it does so is twofold—there are no efforts to retain it, and there are efforts to get rid of it. These words intimate further, that if you persist in neglecting salvation, these things will flow away from you. You are urged to give earnest heed *now* to the things that you have heard, for they are slipping from you, and in a short time, however willing you may be to secure salvation, it will be out of your power. Because “I have called, and ye refused; then shall ye call on me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.” “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near.”

IV. THE THRILLING APPEAL BY WHICH THIS IS SUSTAINED.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?”

In this appeal there is reference,

1. *To the severity of the doom awaiting those who neglect salvation.*

They will receive a just recompense of reward. But who can tell what that will be? They that neglect salvation say, they are willing to stand before God without a Saviour, willing to bear up under the original curse; and oh! what a curse was that! When it came on Christ in Gethsemane, it wrung blood from every pore; when it descended in unmitigated severity on the cross, it caused him to exclaim, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And yet this curse, the nature of which you cannot understand, and the duration of which you cannot comprehend, you choose in preference to salvation.

2. *To the certainty.*

This is argued from fact. Every transgression and disobedience under the former covenant, received a just recompense of reward. Will there, think you, be a departure from this principle now. This certainty is further evident, if we consider that, had it been possible to avoid it, Christ would not have died. Think you, then, that you will escape, when you refuse to come to him to be saved?

XCIX.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

HEB. ii. 5-9.—“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak? But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels: thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thine hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him: but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

It being the apostle's design, in this epistle, to prove from the Old Testament all that was claimed by Jesus Christ; and having, in the first chapter, established the Divine nature of the Messiah, he now proceeds to show that he was also to be a man. How beautifully and ingeniously does he introduce this, by stating that the gracious designs of God to the universe were not developed in the angelic nature. The argument for the human nature of “the Christ” is contained in verses 5—17. It may be thus stated: In the eighth Psalm, universal dominion (the empire of the Messiah) is ascribed to a man; this, it is evident, argues the apostle, is not true in regard to man in general, for he never was higher than the angels, and it is not true that all things are in subjection under him: but Jesus of Nazareth, *who is God*, was made lower than the angels, for he was made man. Jesus of Nazareth is the only one that has ever claimed the character here ascribed to the Messiah. “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” These claims accord with the prediction in the psalm before us. The next step in the argument is to show, that the designs of God respecting the Messiah's kingdom,—a kingdom whose subjects were to be recovered from apostasy,—could not be secured in a way worthy of the Divine character but by suffering; hence the necessity of the human nature. In the next stage the apostle quotes passages applied to the Messiah, in which he is represented calling men his brethren; and then recurring again to the topic with which he set out, he observes, that as God had not selected angels to be the subjects of his mediatorial kingdom, but men; and as these, “the children, partake of flesh and blood, he also partook of the same,” for the purpose of redeeming them.

I. THE GREATNESS OF THE DIVINE CONDESCENSION.

The phrase “the world to come,” refers to the kingdom of the Messiah—a kingdom in which certain features of the Divine character, and certain principles of the Divine government, were

to be developed and illustrated as they had never been before. The greatness of Divine condescension is seen,

1. *In the objects of his choice.*

These were not angels:—"Unto them hath he not put in subjection the world to come." Myriads of them, as well as man, had departed from God, had thrown off his authority, and rebelled against his government. Placed in like circumstances with man, and superior to him in nature, intelligence, position, and employment, they nevertheless were not the objects of redeeming love. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels." Why he passed them by, is one of those inscrutable questions on which we can offer little else than conjecture. He probably saw that their enmity to himself was so great, that it could not consistently with his character be overcome. Be this as it may, there is one reason offered, in verses 14—16, why man was chosen in preference to angels, that the wisdom and power of God might be the more eminently displayed in the destruction of the great adversary with that which was his own work. "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." That God should stoop to regard any of his creatures is condescension; but that he—the framer and possessor of the universe, of innumerable worlds, the work of his fingers, and dependent upon him for their sustained existence—that he should stoop to regard man, who, as compared to this immense universe, is but as small dust of the balance, and who is spiritually worthless and morally vile, is condescension indeed. But to heighten our feelings regarding this condescension, we must look at it—

2. *In the way of its manifestation.*

"Thou madest *him* a little lower than the angels."

Here we find the great fact of the gospel, that the love which God has to man is such, that he has made his own Son man for his sake. That this is the correct application of the passage, whether so understood by the Psalmist or no, is evident from the reasoning of the Apostle, who shows that it is susceptible of no correct interpretation but as applied to Jesus the Son of God. The greatness of the gift is heightened by the circumstances under which it is given. "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers." Had our world been the only one created by God it might have lessened our wonder; but when we consider that our paltry world is but as a grain of sand, compared with the innumerable worlds scattered through illimited space, the fact that God has had such regard for us as to make his Son man for us, ought to excite in us feelings of adoration and gratitude. There has been in modern times an objection to the scheme of redemption, grounded on the paltriness of its object compared with the vastness of the universe. It is some consolation to know that the idea did not originate with the infidel; for we find the Psalmist three thousand years ago lost in amazement at the

wondrous fact, only it exhibited itself in his mind in a strain of adoring gratitude. Whenever the inspired writers touch on this theme, they kindle at once into the greatest enthusiasm. No terms are sufficiently lofty to convey their ideas of the matter; they appear to labour to bring out something worthy of their subject, and yet are compelled to desist, from the conviction that it surpasses human comprehension. When the subject is mentioned to us it excites no feeling, calls forth no enthusiasm; we have heard it so often that it fails to awaken a tithe of the regard it deserves. Not so with the inspired writers: to them that God should become man is the wonder of wonders; the language they employ is calculated to impress with the greatness of their apprehension of it. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Phil. ii. 6—8. In our text it is set forth as an act of power, "Thou madest him;" and there is no reason to doubt that there required the exercise of as much power in the constitution of the Saviour's person as in the creation of a world. That God and man, Divine and human, Infinite and finite, should be united in one person, may well be considered as the masterpiece of the Divine workmanship.

II. THE OBJECT OF THIS CONDESCENSION.

"That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

God became man that he might die; on his "accomplishing his death" depended the achieving all the other gracious designs of the scheme of mediation. Look at it—

1. *In its origin.* "The grace of God."

There was nothing in man to deserve it. Men have no claims upon God, but those which justly condemned criminals may make on their judge. On this point we insist, for some have argued from our text that there is something in man which makes him an object worthy of the Divine regard. But such a view is in direct contradiction to the whole tenor of the Scriptures.

2. *In its nature.*

It was penal. It was the death of a criminal. It is thought that there is a reference to the mode in which criminals, condemned on a charge of treason, were put to death in ancient times. They drank a cup of poison. Christ was condemned by Pilate on a charge of treason; and it was for sin or treason against God that the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all. The death of Christ was substitutionary. He was perfectly holy; he could not therefore die for his own sins; death could not be deserved by him. The death of Christ was the same in kind; he tasted *death*; not merely death of the body. Death is separation from God. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

3. *In its extent.* "For every man."

For all possessing the nature he assumed; the death of Christ has opened the door of salvation for all. Were it possible for us to traverse the globe, and to hold converse with each individual

of its guilty population, we could not find one to whom we could say, Christ has not died for you. The efficacy of his death is not diminished by its diffusion, no more than is the light of yon sun less enjoyed by a hundred than by one.

III. THE CONSEQUENT EXALTATION OF THE REDEEMER.

Our text informs us that the man Christ Jesus, for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honour. It is the exaltation of the human nature that is here spoken of. As God, his essential glory can neither be increased nor diminished; but as possessing human nature he may be crowned with glory and honour. The human nature having suffered, it now shares the glory of the mediatorial kingdom. Look at,

1. *His position.*

The man Christ Jesus sits upon the throne of the mediatorial kingdom; by him its laws are administered, by him its blessings are dispensed. The entire universe is placed under his control. All events are subservient to his will. Angels are subjected to him, and are employed by him as ministering spirits to his brethren, the "heirs of salvation." The kingdom of Providence is under his control, so that he directs all things to the advancement of his kingdom. Devils are subject to him; and, although he permits their opposition to his cause, yet he frequently makes their efforts to destroy subservient to its promotion.

2. *His employment.*

Great gifts have been placed at the disposal of the man Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit is placed by the Father at his disposal. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come—but I will send him unto you." And Peter, speaking of the effects which accompanied the first descent of the Spirit, said—"He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Pardon is another blessing at his disposal: "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." Eternal life is another blessing he bestows: "That he might give eternal life to as many as obey him." And joined to this is the sharing of his glory with those of his followers who persevere to the end: "To him that overcometh, will I give to sit down on my throne."

3. *His prospects.*

He has already been crowned with glory; success has attended the footsteps of his career, but that which has been done is as nothing compared with that which awaits him. He shall reign till all enemies are under his feet. The blessings he has procured shall be diffused in every nation, and his glory shall be sung in every tongue. "Then shall the wilderness and the solitary place be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose." Then shall the scene described in the 60th of Isaiah be fully realized; the people shall be all righteous, violence shall no more be in the land, wasting nor destruction in its borders.

The isles shall wait for his law, the distant places of the earth proclaim his praise. His name shall endure for ever ; his name shall continue as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him. All nations shall call him blessed. To him every knee shall bow, and amidst the rejoicings of the universe it shall be proclaimed, that "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Learn by way of application,

1. To avail yourself of the present opportunity, and come to him and be saved. Let the consideration of his love move you to immediate repentance. Do not suffer him to die in vain. Do not doubt his willingness to save you.

2. But if you will not suffer him to save you, we must affectionately but solemnly remind you, that he will damn you. You must either be subdued by his grace, or destroyed by his power. All things are to be put under him. There is no other alternative ; you must either yield to his mercy, or his justice will seize upon you.

C.

REDEMPTION.

HEBREWS i. 10.—"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Long before Christ came, it had been foretold that he would prove a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence ; that to those who professed to be looking out for him, he would appear to have neither form nor comeliness ; no beauty that he should be desired. When he did come, these predictions were realized ; he came unto his own, and his own received him not. The preaching of salvation through one that had been crucified, was to them a stumbling-block. They could not reconcile the glorious things spoken of Messiah with such a fact. The apostle is showing from the Old Testament what is the real doctrine concerning the Messiah ; and having just proved that he was to possess human nature, he proceeds in our text to assign as a reason, that as Captain of our salvation he might be made perfect by his sufferings.

Redemption is placed before us in our text,

I. IN ITS ORIGIN.

"It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory."

The plan of redemption has God for its author. It originated with him. It is the offspring of his own mind. It bears the

stamp of his own character. In contriving and effecting redemption, it became him—

1. *To do so in a way worthy of himself.*

As a God of power. The state from which man was to be redeemed, was one of thralldom. The devil, who is contending for dominion with God, holds man in subjection. In redeeming man from the power of darkness, the power of God is seen in using means the most unlikely, and instrumentality the most insignificant. The gospel is the power of God. "Therefore, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might *destroy him* that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

As a god of justice and truth. These were pledged to punish sin. God, as moral governor of the universe, cannot permit sin to go unpunished. Then in redeeming man he must secure these. His truth must be inviolate, his justice exhibited, his law magnified, his government upheld.

2. *To do so in a way likely to effect his object.*

In contriving this scheme, there would have to be a special adaptation to all the circumstances of the case. Man is at enmity with God, and he is to be brought to love God. How is this to be produced? What so likely as a manifestation of love such as that exhibited in redemption? *Man hates holiness.* This he is to be brought to love. To effect this, his sympathy is to be excited; sympathy towards holiness and purity, as exhibited in the character of his substitute. *Man is subject to temptations.* These require peculiar provision—knowledge that one has been equally tempted, and yet has escaped, seems essential; succour adapted to the case, and given just in the moment of need, appears imperative. Now, the plan of redemption, to be effectual, must provide for all these circumstances, and for more than these. Our text tells us how all these requirements of the case were met. "It became him to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

II. IN ITS PROGRESS.

1. *The designation given to the Redeemer.* "Captain of our salvation."

In undertaking the redemption of the world the Redeemer had to enter the lists with the prince of darkness. The prey is to be delivered out of the hands of the mighty, who is determined not to yield it without a struggle. From the first appearance of the Redeemer in this character he has been engaged in a contest—a contest which will continue until he has subdued all things to himself. The first intimation of a deliverer has reference to this feature of the case: "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." There is a contest between the Redeemer and Satan for every soul. Every soul is actually delivered from the power of darkness. This designation intimates further, that

the contest continues to the close of life in each individual case, and will last unto the end of time. The foe is determined not to yield up his prey easily; he contests every inch of ground.

2. *His qualifications.*

(1.) *Their source.*

The source of the sufferings of Christ was divine; they were inflicted by the hand of the Father. "It pleased the Father to bruise him." "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." "Him being delivered up by the determined counsel of God."

(2.) *Their nature and variety.*

The sufferings of Christ were of a twofold character. Those which he endured as the sinner's substitute; he died for sin. He gave his life a ransom; the Father laid on him the iniquity of us all. Besides these, there were others through which he passed to qualify him to sympathize and assist his people in their trials and temptations.

(3.) *Their perfection.*

If Christ had not been made perfect, had he not been fully competent to the task, the tide of human guilt and misery would have rolled on, bearing men down to eternal despair. Destroy this truth, and we have guilt without pardon, life without relief, the Bible without truth, revelation without importance, and Christianity without peace. He is made perfect as Mediator. A perfect mediator is one who can reconcile both, can bring both together. In Christ the two parties are so brought together as to make one; He possesses the two natures, yet is but one person—an emblem of the union into which believers are brought with God. By his sufferings he is made perfect as High Priest. Part of his work is intercession—his sufferings qualify him for this. The perfection of his sufferings is seen in their continued and everlasting efficacy. His sufferings have an efficacy which may not only be pleaded for every individual sinner, but for the same sinner under all circumstances, for him after long-continued rebellion—after mercy has been oftentimes refused—after the Spirit has been long resisted.

III. ITS CONSUMMATION.

"Bringing many sons to glory."

1. *The deliverance.*

The term employed is salvation—it embraces a threefold deliverance.

(1.) *Deliverance from the curse of God.*

The curse of God is overwhelming; no sinner can withstand it, no skill defeat it, no plea remove it. It is universal; not one of the whole race but is exposed to it, for it is deserved. Its duration is eternal.

(2.) *From the power of corrupt nature.*

Human nature is totally alienated from God, ever inclined to

evil. They who live in sin are said to be under the dominion of the flesh. They that are in the flesh cannot please God; they are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

(3.) *From the power of Satan.*

His is the power of darkness; he keeps the mind in a state of darkness; he does much to prevent the light and influence of the Spirit from coming into the soul. His is the power of disobedience; he works in the children of disobedience, whom he leads captive at his will. Thus he is said to have the power of death, death being separation from God, for it is sin that separates between God and man. His is also the power of malice—he reaps no possible advantage, but quite the reverse, from his exertions against God and the sinner, but he is prompted by settled, deep-rooted malignity—he hates God.

Now, there is an actual deliverance in each of these particulars in the case of each sinner. This is not salvation in the aggregate merely—it is not that salvation is provided for all, but that in each case there is an exhibition of wisdom, power, love, and mercy, equal to that which was displayed in the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary.

2. *The relationship.*

They were children of the devil—they are now sons of God. They are so by adoption. "To as many as received him gave he power to become the sons of God." "We have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." We are sons of God because Christ, our elder brother, is the Son of God: "Wherefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren." As our elder brother, he not only obtained power to redeem us, but also a right to interfere in our cause whenever danger threatens us. In bringing many sons to glory there is associated constant peril—peril, not to the Captain, but to the sons. The bringing many sons to glory, supposes a contest betwixt the adversary and the Captain—a contest which continues till the crown of victory and the palm of triumph are awarded with, "Well done, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

3. *The state.* "To glory."

It may import victory, bliss, purity, the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy. Christ, our elder brother, is crowned with glory and he is bringing the many sons to be sharers of the same glory. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." "We know not what we shall be, but we shall be like him." "If children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." "To him that overcometh, will I give to sit down with me on my throne." "To glory," to participation in the honours, triumphs, and felicity of the Redeemer.

CI.

THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST.

HEB. ii. 11-12.—“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”

Perhaps there is no truth in the whole range of scripture so firmly and so generally believed, and at the same time whose practical bearing is so little regarded, as the truth stated in the text, that the Lord Jesus has the same nature as ourselves.

I. A GREAT TRUTH STATED.

The text states that he who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one nature.

1. *The Redeemer assumed human nature in its present condition, sin excepted.*

Jesus Christ is a true man; his human nature is distinct from his divine—it could exist separate from the divine. As a man, he has human feelings and sympathies; while on earth he was subject to human infirmities; he hungered, thirsted, wept, and suffered.

2. *This nature he has exalted.*

When he took it upon him it was mortal, encompassed with infirmities—these he bore for a while; but after dying and rising again, his humanity was divested of its mortality and its infirmities; his body was made into a glorious body; and, with his human nature thus transformed, he entered heaven. It is to be remembered, that although the nature underwent some change, yet the nature itself is essentially the same. He is still the man Christ Jesus.

3. *What Christ is now, his followers will eventually become.*

It was for this he assumed our nature. He has been in every respect like unto us, that we may be in every way like unto him. The nature is the same; our nature will be subject to the same transforming influence, and we shall be clothed with like glorious bodies.

II. A REASON ASSIGNED.

In the preceding verse the apostle states that many sons could be brought to glory only through sufferings, through sufferings of an atoning character. In our text he teaches that it is equally necessary that the atonement be made in the nature that sinned. He reasons that there was a fitness, a propriety, a necessity, that man should be saved through an atonement; and now he proceeds to state, that there was an equal fitness that the atonement should be made in the nature of the sinner. In the greater portion of this chapter the apostle is showing that it is the doctrine of the Old Testament that the Messiah was to be a man; and in

our text he offers as a reason, that the atonement *must be made by a man*—that he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, *must be of one nature*. The term sanctifieth, is used, as you well know, to signify set apart for God, or made holy to the Lord. But man could not be set apart for God without an atonement. Hence it was necessary that he who undertook to sanctify men, should partake the same nature with those who were to be sanctified.

III. A GRACIOUS INFERENCE.

“For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

1. *His condescension.*

Ere men could be redeemed, ere many sons could be brought to glory, he who undertook to bring them must be made perfect through sufferings, must submit to the wrath of God, must bear the infliction of the penalty. This itself was degrading—great condescension. But there was, if possible, greater condescension in taking upon him human nature, in joining himself to degraded humanity. Why, had he, the infinite God, joined himself to the highest, the most exalted created nature, it would have been an act of great condescension, because of the great disparity which must always subsist betwixt the Creator and his creature; but he stooped to man—man in his fallen, low, depraved condition. You sometimes shudder as you pass along the street, when you reflect that you possess the same nature with some of the objects you meet with; you feel yourselves almost degraded in the possession of a common nature; and you shrink from having any connexion with persons whose habits are so repugnant to your tastes and feelings; but Jesus Christ assumed this nature—took it upon him voluntarily, joined himself to a nature so vile and degrading.

2. *His love.*

Although human nature is so degraded, so wretched, that mere association is in itself degrading; yet Christ having set his heart on man's salvation, which could not be accomplished but in his nature—he stoops so low as that.

3. *What an exalted relationship is that of believers!*

They are the brethren of Christ. Now, he does not call all men his brethren, only believers; and the reason is here—He found human nature degraded, but did not leave it so; he raised it to the highest position in the universe amongst created beings, and he did so with the intention of raising all who believe in him to the same position; and it is to these, and these alone, that he addresses the term “brethren.” No others have a right to the relationship. Although he took human nature upon him, yet he has refined and exalted it, and it is not till we have ours elevated and renewed that we can claim relationship to Christ as his brethren. The passage quoted by the apostle is to the point, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” The

"name" stands for the nature of God; to "declare" is to reveal; but Christ only reveals the name of God to those that believe in him, and they are then made partakers of the divine nature.

Believers, here is your privilege! Christ is one with you in nature; and, although his nature is exalted above yours, yet there is an essential union and a growing likeness; yea, this union is even now so far complete that you are a part of his body, and soon you will be raised to share the glories of his throne and kingdom.

CII.

THE INCARNATION.

HEB. ii. 14, 15—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

The incarnation of the Saviour is a fact replete with interest—with it are connected the most glorious displays of the Divine character; as well as the dearest interests of man.

Let us direct our attention,

I. TO THE FACT RECORDED IN THE TEXT.

The Son of God assumed true human nature. This may be certainly gathered from the terms which are used on this subject in the Holy Scriptures. From these it is evident that our Lord was true man. "He was made of a woman." He was "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." He was "found in fashion as a man." "The word was made flesh." "God was manifest in the flesh."

The Son of God assumed human nature *for the welfare of man.* It was for the good of "the children;" it was that many sons might be brought to glory. What a manifestation of love is this! What an exhibition of mercy is here! He who resided in the splendour of the Divine glory, came down from that glory and enshrined himself in our clay, and mingled with our degenerate and corrupt race. Why? that he might redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

II. THE DESIGN OF THE INCARNATION.

"That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Here observe,

1. *That all mankind are condemned to death.*

This is a truth which all admit—though it has not that practical influence which a subject so solemn ought to exercise over

us. Death is certain. "We must needs die, and be as water spilt on the ground." Death visits every age and condition. To some its approach is gradual; others are suddenly cut off.

2. *Death holds men in bondage.*

Every one has some fear of death. All have felt the influence of this fear. Men cannot but desire such a catastrophe to be averted. It is not so much the dissolution of the connexion between the soul and body which is thus feared, as it is the consequences of that dissolution. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." It is the fear of endless torment that constitutes the secret of the fear of death.

3. *Christ assumed human nature that he might die.*

In the divine nature he could not die. Suffering in the angelic nature would have been of no value to men. He became man that he might die, and that his death might benefit them for whom he died.

4. *By the death of Christ believers in him are delivered from the fear of death.*

This is a fact. All who have fled for refuge to him have hope. They "are begotten again unto a lively hope." The language of Paul was not peculiar to him. "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ." It is the language of every true believer in Christ.

P.

CIII.

THE DANGER OF DELAYING CONVERSION.

HEBREWS iii. 13.—"But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Every one of you must die: you know not how soon; it may be before the termination of another hour. Every one of you must stand before the judgment seat; and, amongst other things, will have to give an account of the use you have made of the opportunities you have had of securing salvation. Your opportunities are lessening; your time is expiring; your life is ebbing; your danger is increasing. Listen, as for eternity, while we point out to you two sources of danger to which the unconverted are exposed. Some are in danger,

I. FROM FALSE EXPECTATIONS.

It is a very general feeling among hearers of the gospel, that a time will come when they will be more inclined to repent than they are now—when by some remarkable interposition in their behalf; or some extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit; or some favourable change in their outward circumstances; or in some other way—they will be brought into a safe and happy state.

Such persons are persuaded, that, ere they can be saved, they must be converted; that this change must take place, or they are lost for ever. But, along with this persuasion, they think that *now* is not the time for it; that in some future day they will be more *disposed* to repent than they now are; that a better time for repenting will present itself before life terminates; that they will have fewer cares, less employment, not so strong an inclination for worldly and sinful pleasures; and so they yield themselves up to delusive hopes, to the neglect of the great salvation.

That these hopes are delusive may be inferred,

1. *From facts in our own experience.*

Sometimes persons are converted late in life; but we are persuaded that the cases are few; while we should probably find, were we to inquire, that seldom any who have sat under a gospel ministry, and have deferred seeking salvation, have ever been converted in mature or old age. This may be accounted for partly by the fact, that when the truths of the gospel are familiar to the ear, they have little or no influence over the heart. The influence of gospel truths over those who are merely hearers, lessens continually. Every one must have noticed, that truths which formerly affected him, affect him now no more. How, then, can you expect that the truths which do not touch you now, will influence you in years to come? Instances are continually occurring of persons, who have once felt under the proclamation of truth, becoming quite callous and untouched by the most tender or most powerful appeals.

2. *From the hardening nature of sin.*

The more sin is indulged in, the more necessary it becomes to the sinner. When sinful habits are once formed, they are not only difficult to overcome, but they appear essential to the sinner's life. How vain is their hope who expect to be more able to abandon sin in the future, than they are now! Their chains will be faster riveted. Each sin adds a fresh link to the chain. Every fresh indulgence increases the power of the habit; and not only so, the more men sin, the more their temptations to sin; their temptations increase while there is a decrease of power to resist.

3. *From the character of God.*

If one thing can be more offensive than another to the Almighty, it is deliberately to neglect the great salvation. Who are they that are left by God under judicial blindness? Are they not those who have long refused to avail themselves of gospel light? Who are they that God threatens suddenly to destroy, but they who are often reprov'd? "Who can stand before his indignation?" "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

Others are in danger,

II. FROM MISTAKEN VIEWS.

1. *Some mistake the form of religion for religion itself.*

Attendance on public worship; keeping the Sabbath-day; reading the sacred Scriptures; and other things that are inseparably connected with religion, may yet be performed by persons entirely destitute of religion.

2. *Some mistake zeal in the propagation of Christ's cause for love to the Saviour.*

Now there may be a great deal of this kind of zeal, without a grain of love to Christ. It may be real party zeal; zeal for that section of Christ's church with which we may have been connected from infancy.

3. *Some mistake fear of the consequences of sin for true repentance.*

True repentance includes godly sorrow—sorrow for having offended God. This is more difficult to realize after oft-repeated refusals of the gospel.

N.

CIV.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST A MOTIVE TO STEADFASTNESS.

HEB. iv. 14.—“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”

Whoever makes himself master of the argument of the epistle to the Hebrews, will be acquainted with the sum and substance of the Christian religion. Here we have the law, with its various types and institutions, employed as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. In this epistle the apostle offers various arguments in favour of Christianity, to confirm the faith and attachment of the convert; and especially does he show that, by forsaking Judaism, and adopting the Christian profession, they are gainers in every way.

I. THE EXHORTATION TO STEADFASTNESS.

The term “profession” in some places means the religion itself which we profess; the facts on which it is founded—the doctrines which it promulgates—the promises and privileges which are connected with it—and the duties which it enjoins: but here it refers to the act of profession.

1. *All nominal Christians are professors of Christ.*

It may be taken up out of convenience, or from deference to established custom—or in compliance, or in consequence of early tuition. On these there rests an obligation to cultivate personal holiness; but persons of this class try to get away from this obligation by saying, “Oh, we make no profession of religion!”

But this is untrue, and impious; for you must either go all the lengths with the infidel, and avow all disbelief in Christianity, or else you must be assured you are a professed Christian.

2. *But there are others who are professors of Christ, not merely in name, but in deed and in truth.*

This profession is distinguished by these marks,

(1.) *It is scriptural.*

It rests on a careful examination and a clear conviction of the truth of our holy religion. It is not the result of education, of party zeal, or of caprice. The true professor can offer a better reason for his belief than the Turk can for his attachment to the Koran—he is always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him.

(2.) *It is experimental.*

Every true Christian has realized in his own conscience the tranquillizing and renovating character of true religion. Every Christian is saved from the guilt and power of sin.

(3.) *It is practical.*

Zeal in doing the will of God—patience in suffering—readiness to perform kind offices—strenuous exertion for the purpose of extending the benefits of Christianity, are some of the practical characteristics of the true professor.

II. THE MOTIVE BY WHICH THIS EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED.

The doctrine of our Saviour's priesthood is full of comfort, and is very largely treated of in the New Testament. Here he is viewed as a High Priest greater than Aaron. He is so—

1. *Because of the place where he exercises his office.*

He has passed into the heavens—his kingdom cannot be moved—he has access to the ear and to the heart of God—he appeareth in his presence for us.

2. *Because of the benefits of his mediation.*

Actual salvation is the result to believers of the priestly office of Christ. Aaron and his sons were priests, but not saviours; their sacrifices were but typical—they derived all their value from their connexion with a better sacrifice and nobler blood; but our High Priest is able to save.

3. *Because of the superior dignity of his nature.*

From this flows the following benefits—the perfect, complete, and plenary virtue of his sacrifice—the whole stock of his merit is available for the purpose of salvation. The perpetual exercise of his priesthood; “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

IN CONCLUSION,

1. *We ought to hold by our profession.*

The salvation is complete and perfect—there is every thing provided worthy of God.

2. *We may hold it fast.*

It is a thing possible and practicable, for your High Priest has not left you to yourselves.

R.

CV.

THE THRONE OF GRACE.

HEBREWS iv. 16.—“ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need.”

Sin has interrupted the intercourse which was once freely permitted with heaven. Of that intercourse there can be no renewal but through a mediator. Sin is an infinite offence, requiring a sacrifice of infinite merit. An atonement of sufficient value has been made—a Mediator has been appointed—who, by the constitution of his person, and the perfection of his sacrifice is able to save unto the uttermost. In the scheme of mediation there is every thing that God requires, or that is needed by man.

I. THE DESIGNATION HERE GIVEN TO THE MEDIATOR.

“ The throne of grace.”

A throne is the seat from which a monarch administers justice and dispenses his favours. The language of the text has a reference to the mercy-seat of the Jewish economy. On the mercy-seat was the symbol of the Divine presence—before it was presented the blood of atonement and the incense of intercession. Jesus Christ is our mercy-seat. “ Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation”—in him we have redemption—to him we are to bring our sins, that his blood may purge them away—in him God and man are reconciled—in him God and man meet together. The mercy-seat was an emblem of the union of justice and mercy—of truth and love—of regard to the law, yet of pardon of sin. In Christ this union is real. In him mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

II. THE INVITATION HERE GIVEN.

We are invited to come and obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

1. *That we may obtain mercy.*

These words specify the persons to whom the invitation is given. It is the sinner that needs mercy; but it is only the sinner who feels his misery that will apply for mercy. Every sinner stands in need of *forbearing mercy*. The sentence of death is upon all; all are under condemnation. Each sinner stands in need of *preventing mercy*. Inclined to evil from nature and habit, unless held back by preventing grace, he is continually falling into sin. The sinner stands in need of *forgiving mercy*. If he obtain not this,

he must sink into infinite woe. Now for all the mercy that we need, we have only to come—the mercy is provided—we have not to persuade God to be merciful—we are to come for the mercy he is *waiting* to bestow.

2. *Grace to help in time of need.*

Mercy supposes unworthiness in the sinner—grace, unworthiness in the believer. Grace is to be sought in times of need—in the day of prosperity—in that of adversity—in seasons of health—in seasons of sickness—in the hour of mental depression, and the hour of spiritual elevation—the period of temptation—of duty—in the hour of death.

III. THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS TO BE APPROACHED.

1. *We are to come individually.*

Prayer is to be offered by ourselves; our own state and necessities must be brought to the throne of grace. "Behold, *he* prayeth," must be the language used of us.

2. *We are to come with freedom.*

Freedom of speech is permitted as well as freedom of access. We are to come with a freedom that is without fear—"perfect love casteth out fear;" with a freedom that is without presumption—the freedom of the child asking in the name of the Saviour.

4. *We are to come with frequency.*

This throne, unlike the mercy-seat, is accessible at all hours; the oftener we come the more we shall obtain, the more willing we shall be to come.

R. W.

CVL

CHRIST PERFECTED.

HEB. v. 9.—"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

In this epistle we have presented to us Christ, the Son of God, in the character of our great High Priest, our Mediator, and Advocate with God; through whose perfect sacrifice, through whose everlasting priesthood, we sinners have access to God, the remission of our sins, the present hope and the future possession of everlasting life.

I. IN WHAT SENSE CHRIST WAS MADE PERFECT.

Not with respect to his essential divinity; in this he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person"—"in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead." Nor with respect to his moral character, or the purity of his moral nature: in this respect he was harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. His was an official perfection—a perfection

appertaining to his office as High Priest, Mediator, Redeemer, Saviour—a perfection which he had not, and could not have, before he assumed our nature, before he accomplished our redemption.

II. THE WAY IN WHICH HE WAS MADE PERFECT.

“Being made perfect.”

1. *We have the assumption of humanity.*

It was necessary, in order to Christ's perfection as our high priest, that he should assume our nature. Had he come to mediate for angels, he would have assumed angelic nature; but he came to mediate for man. His great errand was to seek and to save the lost human family. He condescended to take our nature upon him, that in that nature he might accomplish the great purpose of man's salvation.

2. *We have the endurance of unparalleled suffering and submission to death.*

“Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.” The blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin; therefore Christ came to offer himself, that by the sacrifice of himself he might put away sin. He submitted to death, even the death of the cross; his death was the price of our redemption—a sacrifice offered to the justice of the Divine law, for our exemption from its penalty. To this precious sacrifice we trace our salvation. All our hopes centre in the cross of Christ.

3. *We have the resurrection and the ascension as proofs given by the Father that Christ was made perfect.*

The resurrection of Christ is to be regarded, not merely as affording demonstration of the truth of Christ's doctrine, but as setting forth the completion of redemption. “He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.” The resurrection of Christ was with the very same nature in which he had suffered, thus proving that he had redeemed it from the power of the grave, and delivered it from the dominion of death. The ascension of Christ was necessary to his appearing in the presence of God for us. Had he not been made perfect, his entrance into heaven in his official character, could not have been permitted; but heaven is now prepared for the sinner's entrance; it is purged or made ready by the blood of the better sacrifice; every sinner that enters heaven has the blood present with him, in right of which his entrance is secured.

III. THE END SECURED.

“He became the Author of eternal salvation.”

Salvation is provided by the sacrifice which Christ has offered—that sacrifice has redeemed man from the curse of the law. Pardon for sin is *bestowed by Christ*. He gives repentance and remission of sins. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and thus prepares for mingling with that throng, that “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the

Lamb." To whom is this salvation secured? To all them that obey him. To obey him is to do the things which he has commanded—repent—abandon sin and confess it, and supplicate for pardon; believe, that if you come for this pardon it will be given to you—believe, that there is no necessity for you suffering the penalty due to your sins—believe, that Christ has satisfied the claims which Divine justice had upon you—believe, and show that you do so by coming to him now for pardon—believe, and show that your faith is real, by this moment taking the blessing which God is holding out to you. Delay no longer—give up that soul of thine to its rightful owner. He has bought it with his blood—it belongs to him—give it up this moment to him, and he will wash it and make it new.

S.

CVII.

THE PROMISES.

HEBREWS vi. 18.—“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.”

Rich provision is made for the people of God in the gospel, suited in every respect to their necessities, and fully adequate to the supply of their wants; they enjoy present privileges—they are heirs of invaluable promises.

I. THE CHARACTER.

“Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them.”

The Scriptures are highly figurative, especially so when describing the Saviour of the world; he is sometimes represented as a covert from the tempest—at others, as the “shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Again, his name is said to be a strong tower, into which the righteous run and are safe—here he is set forth as “the hope” of his people.

1. *He is the object of their hope.*

In him they trust for every blessing, both for time and eternity—it is their connexion with him that secures salvation to them—they are one with Christ—they are joint heirs with him.

2. *He is the foundation of their hope.*

“There is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved,”—“other foundation can no man lay.” This foundation is laid in blood—the blood of Christ.

3. *He is the author of their hope.*

“They are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him,

4. *Their hope is real.*

They have laid hold of the hope set before them ; they were made conscious of their guilt ; they became sensible of their danger ; they were led to seek some method of salvation ; they were convinced that in Christ there was safety ; he was set before them by the Holy Spirit, and then they embraced him as their Saviour.

II. THEIR PRIVILEGE.

"They have strong consolation."

Believers only know what this means ; to the carnal man the consolations flowing from the presence and promises of God, are foolishness ; he cannot discern them.

This consolation is,

1. *Divine in its origin.*

It is not to be obtained in the world, nor in any course of sin : sin yields no real positive enjoyment, it produces misery ; but religion brings peace to the soul, it imparts joy in sorrow, life in death. The presence of God illumines this "valley of the shadow of death."

2. *It is strong consolation.*

A consolation which nothing can destroy. Cares may harass, difficulties perplex, disappointments may meet him, but his mind is serene ; his peace continues ; his joy has not its source in earthly things, and cannot therefore be much affected by earthly interests.

3. *It is permanent in its duration.*

The joys of the sinner are transitory—they are sure to fail ; but the strong consolation of the Christian is eternal. His path through life is alleviated with it, while it throws a brilliant light over the future.

III. THE SECURITY.

This is based,

1. *On the promise of God.*

God cannot lie—his promise cannot fail. A promise is sometimes broken from want of inclination, or of power, to fulfil it ; but our God is infinitely willing to do all that he has promised—and infinitely able to accomplish all that he has willed. The justice and the truth of God, as well as his mercy and love, are engaged to fulfil his promises.

2. *On the oath of God.*

He has pledged, as it were, his own Godhead to bestow the blessings of redemption on all that believe. Fear keeps many a penitent from the Saviour—it cannot be that sins like mine can be forgiven. To counterbalance, nay, to destroy such a fear, God has upon oath declared, that all that will come, may come and be saved. Oh, how unworthy and God-dishonouring a thing is unbelief!

CVIII.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

HEBREWS ix. 27.—“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

These are solemn truths ; truths which ought to be kept before our minds. Each of us has to die ; each of us must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ ; each of us must receive the sentence that will raise us to heaven, or doom us to hell. Our thoughts are now to be directed to the judgment.

I. IT IS CERTAIN THAT THERE WILL BE A DAY OF JUDGMENT.

The statement of this fact meets us on every page of the Bible ; it is incorporated with, and supposed by, every doctrine of the sacred Scriptures.

1. *It will be ushered in by appalling circumstances.*

The sun, the moon, the stars, are to pass away—the dead are to be raised—the earth is to be burned up, and to pass away as a parched scroll—there is to be an assembling of the whole universe—angels, men, and devils—to take part in the transactions—or to receive sentence for their deeds.

2. *It has an appointed time.*

It is to be at the end of the world ; by it the scene of time will be brought to a close—the transactions of earth shut up. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world. There is no uncertainty with God as to the time. That is settled.

II. CHRIST WILL BE THE JUDGE.

He who now sits on the throne of grace, dispensing the blessings of his mercy, will then be seated on the throne of judgment. And consider that he has a perfect right to bring every one to account, not only because he is God, but because of his having bought the whole race with his blood. He is also perfectly qualified, for he knows all things ; not only how many sins have been committed, but also how many offers of mercy have been refused—how many opportunities of securing salvation have been slighted or misused—and how many times the Holy Spirit has been resisted. He is omnipotent, and can compel the attendance of the sinner at the judgment-seat, however unwilling. He is perfectly just ; so that from his decision there is no appeal. Of all the millions that will then receive their sentence from his lips, there will not be one individual to impeach its equity.

III. THE TRANSACTIONS OF THAT DAY.

All shall then stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. All of every class and condition. You who now listen to my voice, must listen to the voice of your judge.

1. *You will be judged for every thing with which you had any connexion in time.*

You must give account of your privileges—your Sabbaths—your sermons—your opportunities. You must be judged as to your actions—secret and open—whether you have forgot them or not. For your words, whether evil or otherwise: the tendency of your words will be the subject of examination. For your thoughts and feelings. In a word, you must be judged for what you have done, and for what you have left undone.

2. *The sentence will be immediately fulfilled.*

You will either be removed at once to heaven, or banished to hell. There is no higher court: from the decisions of this day there is no appeal. Now it is either everlasting life, or an eternal hell.

J.

CIX.

THE EXALTATION OF THE REDEEMER.

HEB. x. 12, 13.—“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.”

The subject of the apostle's contemplation is the Redeemer—a subject never out of place—a theme never inappropriate.

View him,

I. IN THE SACRIFICE HE OFFERED.

With the sacrifice of Christ our dearest hopes are connected. We have forsaken the law of our God; renounced the guidance and control of our Maker; and followed the impulses of principles and passions, whose only object is to hurry us to destruction. But behold the device of infinite wisdom, and the triumph of abounding mercy: Jesus suffers for our sins, “the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.”

1. *His sacrifice was voluntary.*

It was not a constrained consent to become the sinner's substitute: “*Lo, I come,*” is his language, “to do thy will, O God!” And having once undertaken the redemption of our race, he never looked back; his consent to become our substitute was never, for one moment, the subject of regret. Never did the captive long so earnestly for the day of his release, nor the warrior for that of his triumph, as Jesus did for the period when he could say, “It is finished.”

2. *His sacrifice was sufficient.*

The sacrifices under the Mosaic economy were many, because it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. His sacrifice was one; by it sin is sufficiently atoned for. It was one; hence we argue its universal merit—its continual value—and its perpetual application.

3. *His sacrifice was vicarious and painful.*

A sacrifice for sins, his whole life was one sacrifice; from the manger to Calvary was one offering. By this sacrifice hell is vanquished—man liberated—heaven peopled—God glorified.

View him,

II. IN THE POSITION HE AFTERWARDS ASSUMED.

"For ever sat down on the right hand of God." This position exhibits—

1. *His satisfaction in the completion of his work.*

"Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising its shame." "We see Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." From the sacrifice of Christ there flow to the world great and inestimable blessings: "Men shall be blessed in him, yea, all nations shall call him blessed." This is a consummation that yields him the sweetest delight. He rejoices in the utter discomfiture of the adversary—in the rescue of the prey out of the hands of the mighty—in the conversion of sinners to himself—and especially in the praise which is presented by the ranks of his redeemed before his throne.

2. *As the object of adoration in a new character.*

He had received the praises of angelic intelligences before—he had been the subject of their praise when they witnessed his creative power; then "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." But now they witness a manifestation of his character for which no previous display had prepared them. The connexion of Infinite with finite—the union of God with man—the retaining the nature for ever—was a development of the Divine character for which angels were not prepared. These things they desire to look into; hence he is the theme of their continual adoration.

3. *As the pledge of the believer's future exaltation.*

There is nothing in the glory that surrounds the Redeemer which appears at all desirable to a wicked man; but to the believer the presence of Christ gives beauty, splendour, and brilliancy to the glory and enjoyments of heaven; he, therefore, longs to be there. Here is the pledge that you will be there; for where he is, you are to be also. O, believer in Christ, rest assured that you will be nothing the loser by your attachment to him, or by what you suffer for his name!

View him,

III. IN THE EXPECTATION IN WHICH HE NOW INDULGES.

He is waiting for the destruction of his foes, and for the success of his cause.

1. *The destruction of his foes.*

These are sin and death; the devil is already conquered, and is held in chains. Sin—the foe of God—the abominable thing—shall be destroyed. Sin ought never to be contemplated but in

connexion with the death of Christ. Death—how vast its reign—how mighty its empire!—yet it shall be destroyed.

2. *The success of his cause.*

Sin shall be done away—the misery it has caused shall finally disappear—the impenitent and the first transgressors shall be imprisoned together—all things shall be placed under his feet.

R.

CX.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

HEB. ix. 24-26.—“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; (for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world:) but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

The very general prevalence of animal sacrifice, both in ancient and modern times, shows that that peculiar and bloody rite is of divine origin. Without some express revelation from heaven, sacrifices could never have been offered. For what connexion can be discovered between the slaughter of an animal, and the expiation of human guilt? It is highly probable that the first death that took place after the introduction of sin into the world, was that of a victim offered in sacrifice. Sacrifice was anciently presented, and was acceptable merely, because it was divinely instituted, in relation to that splendid and amazing plan of redemption which the angels desired to look into. In our text there is a comparison carried out betwixt the priesthood and sacrifices of the preceding dispensation, and the one offering and priestly office of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Saviour is here exhibited to us—

I. IN THE OFFICE HE SUSTAINS.

He is a priest. One design of the apostle in this most luminous and eloquent epistle is to show that Christianity, so far from discarding the doctrine of atonement, carries it out, and consummates it in the death of Christ. So far from having no sacrifice and no priest, we have a sacrifice to which every other pointed, and from which they derived their value; we have a priest, who is pre-eminently superior to all who ever offered the blood of bulls and goats as oblations to the Supreme; who has presented richer blood and a nobler sacrifice, the sacrifice of himself.

1. *His qualifications.*

Jesus Christ is eminently and unspeakably qualified in every respect. *He is a partaker of our common nature; and therefore*

he is able to sympathize with us. What a delightful thought to the Christian, that he has a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities! *Jesus Christ is eminently holy.* "He knew no sin;" he was at an immeasurable distance from it; he was utterly unacquainted with it. In this respect the ancient priesthood failed to represent him; but it will be remembered there was a typical imagery of it which was most striking and significant. They had to go through a number of ceremonies that they might be ritually holy; but our High Priest needs no such sacrifice: "For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice first for himself." Again; *He was divinely appointed.* "Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee," also said, "Thou art a priest for ever."

2. *He performs every duty which the office includes.*

The priest had to offer sacrifice: "Wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat to offer." And what does he present?

"Rivers of oil, and seas of blood?
Alas! they all must flow in vain."

What does he present? Silver and gold? No! we are not redeemed with corruptible things, "such as silver and gold." He presents himself: he became at once the priest and the victim.

The priest entered the holy place with the blood of the victim. "But Christ, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered in once into the holy place." There he intercedes for his people; there he pleads the merit of his sacrifice.

"He pleads his passion on the tree,
He shows himself to God for me."

II. IN THE CHARACTER OF HIS PRIESTHOOD.

In another part of this epistle he is styled a "great High Priest."

Here notice—

1. *The dignity of his person.*

He is Divine—the only-begotten of the Father. Other priests were taken from amongst men; but he came from the throne of God.

2. *The extent of his sacrifice.*

The high priest under the law offered sacrifice for the Jews only; but he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. *He has put away sin* by the sacrifice of himself; he has made a complete atonement for it, so that every sinner of our race may obtain mercy; he has put away sin, so that every individual that comes to the Father through him will find that there is no charge against himself; all who come through him are "justified freely."

CHAPTER IX.

THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL IS THE GOD OF THE LIVING. He was
the God of the fathers, and he is the God of the fathers
and of the children.

THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL IS THE GOD OF THE LIVING.
He is the God of the fathers, and he is the God of the fathers
and of the children.

THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL IS THE GOD OF THE LIVING. He is the God of the fathers, and he is the God of the fathers
and of the children.

THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL IS THE GOD OF THE LIVING.

THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL IS THE GOD OF THE LIVING. His life here was
the life of the fathers, and he is the God of the fathers
and of the children.

T.

BENJAMIN'S ENTRY INTO THE HOLIEST.

"The Lord God of Israel is the God of the living. He is the God of the fathers, and he is the God of the fathers
and of the children."

much greater are the privileges than those under the
law alone, and not the Israelites could enter into the
holiest but once a year, and then with the blood of
offerings for himself and them; whereas every penitent
sinner can now, by faith in Christ's blood and prayer,
enter into the holiest of all in heaven, and there converse with
the Lord. The priestly character of Christ is in every as-
pect of his people.

THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL IS THE GOD OF THE LIVING.

into the holiest."

An evident reference to the holy place under
the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat
were the two tables of the broken law; over

the mercy-seat was the emblem of the Divine presence. All these were emblematical of the union which subsists between justice and mercy in the plan of human redemption.

1. *Permission to enter the holiest is now granted to every believer.*

Under the law it was not so; the high priest alone entered, and that but once a year. To approach then required sacrifices expensive in their character; to approach now the presence of God, there is nothing required but a humble trust and confidence in the great Redeemer.

2. *Boldness of approach is expected from those who avail themselves of this new and living way.*

In performing the services required from him in the holy place, the high priest was in continual fear. A solemn dread rested upon him while he was *in the presence*, where he remained not very long. Silence also was imposed upon him: the solemn stillness of that inner sanctuary was not to be broken by a human voice—prayer was offered emblematically—incense was waved before the mercy-seat—but no voice was heard. But we have boldness to enter—boldness of speech—liberty to plead our own cause—liberty to multiply arguments—liberty to be importunate in our supplications—liberty to come frequently to the throne of grace.

II. THE GROUND OF APPROACH.

“By the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”

1. *We have a right to approach.*

The blood of Jesus has procured it—the handwriting against us has been removed—the barrier has been thrown down—the terms of reconciliation have been propounded—the propitiatory has been erected—the sin-offering has been presented—the atonement has been accepted.

2. *The way of approach.*

It is a new way; it is connected with the new covenant—it is new; for all who will may walk in it. It was not so with the old one; a wall of partition separated Jew from Gentile. It is new, having been newly consecrated; a way newly made manifest by Christ's sacrifice newly slain and offered. Not only is it a new, but a living way. It is by our High Priest, not merely in reference to him, but through him. Our High Priest is the way; he also is our leader along the way. He is a living way, for he is the source of spiritual life. Dead in trespasses and sins, we could not come to God were we not first quickened from above. It is a living way; hence its perpetuity. It is a way always open; it is a living way—therefore an everlasting way; it lasts all the way to God, and it lasts for ever.

III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE SHOULD APPROACH.

1. *We must approach in sincerity.* “With a true heart.”

The way is only open to those who truly repent them of their

sins. He who has now desire for communion with God is permitted to have access to him. God looketh at the heart: not at the posture of the body—though that ought to denote reverential humility; not at the language employed—though that ought to be the most fitting that can be selected; but at the sincerity of the worshipper.

2. *We must approach in confidence.*

To approach God aright, so as to secure an abundance of spiritual blessings, requires not only that we should have a personal faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, but also a full assurance that whatever we ask in his name, will be granted to us. Besides faith in the Saviour, we are exhorted also to have faith in God; and what a powerful motive to faith in God is supplied by the unspeakable gift which he has bestowed upon us!

J. H. J.

CXII.

THE NATURE OF FAITH.

HEBREWS xi. 1.—“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

There are a great many false notions about the nature of faith: some think that it is the mere belief which the understanding gives to the facts of the Gospel History. This the apostle James shows to be incorrect when he says, “the devils also believe and tremble.” Others think that it is credulity, or believing the most marvellous things upon the authority of another. But faith is nothing like this. Let us then examine,

I. THE NATURE OF FAITH.

Notice,

1. *The apostle's definition of Faith.*

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Substance signifies *reality* opposed to shadow; so that faith will thus signify the realization, or making realities of our hopes. Thus if we hope for the return of a friend upon such a day, but have no confidence in his punctuality or adherence to his word, we make no preparations for his arrival. That is hope, but not faith; but if we treat his word and know his punctuality we make preparations for his arrival. We act as if our hope were a reality. That is faith.

But again the apostle tells us, that faith is the evidence of things not seen; that is, the firm persuasion or full conviction of the existence of unseen objects. Thus we believe in the existence of Paris or of Rome, though we have never seen them.

2. *Examples of men who have exercised this Faith.*

Abraham, though he was childless, believed the promise of God, that his yet unborn posterity should possess the land of Canaan, although at that time it was occupied by fierce and hostile tribes; and that in him and in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. There were a great many improbabilities here; but Abraham, who *hoped* in the accomplishment of these promises, immediately proceeded to *act* upon his hopes, and left his country and kindred, not knowing whither he went.

Columbus, who had from study and reflection arrived at the conclusion, that by sailing westward, across the yet unexplored Atlantic Ocean, he should discover a country of vast size and magnificence, immediately set about the accomplishment of this discovery. He had as full a conviction of the existence of this land as if he had seen it; and this *faith* sustained him under all the ridicule and refusals he met with in trying to obtain ships, and supported his spirit under the hardships of the voyage.

3. *Inferences from these examples.*

Faith is not *merely* hope, Abraham might have had a *hope* that God's promises were true, but without *faith* he would have never acted as if they were. Faith is not merely the belief of the understanding. Columbus might have believed in the correctness of his reasonings; but without *faith* would have sat down and idly wondered whether this land would ever have been discovered or not. Faith is a principle of action—a moral quality exerting a powerful influence upon the character. If its object be good, its influence is proportionably good; if its object be bad, its influence is proportionably bad; but Christian faith, being fixed upon the best of all objects, is the most powerful principle for good upon earth.

II. THE EFFECTS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.

1. *Pardon.*

Christ has purchased for us pardon, by shedding his blood for our sakes. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all" (Isaiah liii. 6). "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world" (John i. 29). "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6).

2. *Holiness.*

We are the slaves of sin by nature. We love pleasure more than God; and since we love evil, and not good, there must be an entire change in our affections and wills before we can love God and duty. But this change is effected "when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us" (Rom. v. 5); when the Spirit of God enables us to see the love of Christ upon the cross, and to love him in return. We then love what Christ loves, and hate what Christ hates. If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John xiv. 15). Thus "faith, which worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6), is the instru-

ment employed by the Spirit in effecting the new birth—that is, an entire change in our moral nature (Gal. v. 6, compared with Gal. vi. 15).

3. *Happiness.*

Perfect happiness is the lot only of the perfectly righteous (Psalms i. 1-3). Sin is the cause of misery. When sin is completely destroyed, we shall be perfectly happy; and we know that through Jesus Christ this will be finally the case (Rom. vii. 24, 25; 1 John iii. 2). In the mean time, we have consolation and hope since our guilt is blotted out, and we have the earnest of the Spirit (Ephes. i. 13, 14).

C. S.

CXIII.

CHRISTIAN EFFORT TO SAVE SOULS.

JAMES v. 20.—“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

The Holy Scriptures teach us the doctrine of human depravity, and on this they build the necessity of conversion. They also tell us that men are guilty, and exposed to the penalties of a violated law; and that, unconverted, they must perish. They also inform us, that however desperate their case, through the mercy of God in Christ, they may be converted. Some have been converted, and on these is laid the obligation to seek the conversion of others.

I. THE OBJECT AT WHICH CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO AIM.

The conversion of sinners from the error of their ways.

1. *Conversion is an entire change.*

There is a change required in the understanding—a change required in the will—a change required in the affections—a change required in the deportment—a change relative and real is required in the condition. Such a change is effected in conversion. They who were dark become light in the Lord; they who were led captive by the devil at his will, and served divers lusts and pleasures, are delivered from the bondage of corruption, and from the power of Satan; their hearts become affected with the love of God, and they receive redemption in the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of their sins.

2. *Conversion is necessary.*

Without it there is no religion—without it there is no deliverance from the penal consequences of sin—without it the sinner remains exposed to the wrath of God, and is under condemnation to eternal fire.

II. THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO SEEK IT.

That it is the duty of every Christian to labour for the conversion of his fellow-sinners, may be argued,

1. *From the method of the Divine government.*

God appears to have established it as a principle of his government, to do nothing for man which man can do for himself, or can do for others. God does what man cannot do; take an instance. When Elijah warned Ahab of the three years' drought, his life was in danger from Ahab's violence. Now God could at once have rescued the prophet by an instant removal; but the prophet was directed to depart, to do that which he himself could do. But when, at the command of God, he went to a place where he could not procure food, then God did what the prophet could not do; he sent the ravens to feed him. See this principle also exemplified in the raising of Lazarus from the tomb: that which could be done by those about him, the Saviour directed to be done; but that which he only could do, he commanded himself, and it was done. Now this appears to be the principle on which God acts in the conversion of sinners.

2. *From the spirit and tendency of Christianity.*

Christianity inspires its possessors with a desire for its diffusion. They who are saved themselves, are desirous for the salvation of others; and not only so, it also qualifies men to become instruments in the conversion of others. It confers on them a moral power, arising from the change which is effected in their own hearts and character. It gives unto them as well, power with God. There is a reference to this in the preceding verses. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much—has much power with God. Elijah, when desirous of converting Israel to God, prayed for drought, and God granted it; how much more likely is he to give, at your earnest effectual prayer, the Holy Spirit to those in whose conversion you interest yourselves?

3. *From the history of the Church.*

Myriads of sinners have been converted in every age—sinners of every character, and age, and nation. And by whom has their conversion been instrumentally effected? The only answer is—by human agency. Such agency was employed at Pentecost, when, if ever, it was not at all wanted. Human agency was employed with Saul of Tarsus, although, in the first instance, arrested by direct interference from heaven. So it has been in each succeeding age; and so, we argue, it will continue to the end of time.

III. SOME POWERFUL MOTIVES TO PERSEVERING ZEAL.

I. *He that converteth a sinner, saveth a soul from death.*

Who can estimate the value of a soul? Contemplate it in its origin—in its capacity—in its redemption—in its immortality. Now, in the conversion of a sinner, the soul is saved from spiritual death; unconverted, it is dead—dead in sin—separated from God. In the conversion of a sinner the soul is saved from eternal death;

from blackness and darkness; from tribulation and wrath; from fire and brimstone; from the worm that dieth not; from weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

2. *He shall hide a multitude of sins.*

Every sinner is guilty of a multitude of sins; but when conversion takes place, all these are blotted out. Every sinner leads others to commit a multitude of sins; but if he is converted, his influence receives another direction. Every sinner, when converted, is saved from committing a multitude of sins. In these and other ways the conversion of a sinner hides a multitude of sins.

Y.

CXIV.

BELIEVERS' SAFETY.

1 PETER i. 5.—“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”

All the people of God are partakers of most exalted privileges; theirs is the adoption—adoption into the family of God. They are temples of the Holy Spirit—the dwelling-place of the Most High. The people of God are surrounded by dangers, but they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

I. WHAT ARE THEY KEPT FROM?

1. *They are not kept from persecution.*

The people of God in all ages have been exposed to this: “they that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.” Its form may be varied, but they will have the thing.

2. *They are not kept from affliction and death.*

These the righteous are as subject to as the wicked. Here there is no difference in their lot. All the ills that flesh is heir to, come alike on the believer and the unbeliever.

3. *They are not kept from temptation.*

Satan is permitted to harass the people of God; he exerts all his wiles to destroy them, by drawing them into sin. The devil goeth about, seeking to devour. And the believer is not ignorant of his devices; but knows that he has to wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of darkness in high places.

The believer, though not preserved from these things, is nevertheless kept in them; watched over by God, strengthened by his Spirit; so long as they retain their faith in the Saviour they are kept; kept in peace—in joy—in love.

II. HOW ARE THEY KEPT?

1. *By the power of God.*

The believer who is acquainted with his own character, feels that he is weak,

"Weaker than a bruised reed,
Help I every moment need."

But here is the source of strength. Is he assaulted by the enemy of human souls?—he is strengthened by the power of God to resist the devil. Is he beset by the allurements of the world?—the same power enables him to "touch not, taste not, handle not." Is he the subject of personal affliction?—then the grace of God is proved to be sufficient for him, while he adds his testimony to that of the apostle—"when I am weak, then I am strong." They are kept by the *promises of God*. Unto them are left exceeding great and precious promises, that, by two immutable things, they might have strong consolation. They are kept by the *covenant of God*. The covenant ordered in all things and sure. The gift of the covenant is the Lord Jesus, who is a partaker of human nature, that he may succour all that are tempted, who, in virtue of his meritorious sacrifice, is able to save unto the uttermost.

2. *Through faith.*

This is the instrumental cause of the believer's security. Faith in the promises of God, a firm reliance on his word, a full persuasion that he will do that which he has promised. How great things are spoken of this faith! See it illustrated in the case of Abraham, the father of the faithful—look at it as it was exercised by the three Hebrew children—see its importance as implied in the address of our Lord to Peter. "I have prayed for thee that thy *faith fail not*."

III. WHAT ARE THEY KEPT FOR?

They are kept—so are the wicked reserved until the day of judgment and of wrath, but the people of God are kept unto salvation. They have already experienced a partial deliverance from sin—they are kept for a total, entire, eternal deliverance. They have already had some of the joys of salvation—they are kept that they may possess fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. They are already in possession of some privileges—they are kept that they may be put in possession of privileges much greater; kept to share the glories, and partake of the inheritance, and to be with the Saviour.

S.

CXV.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST CLEANSETH FROM ALL SIN.

1 John i. 7.—“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin.”

There is not an individual attendant on a gospel ministry, who is not on some occasions, however regardless he may be at others, desirous of being reconciled to God. Under some powerful application of the truth by the Spirit of God, his conscience is roused, his fears awakened, and he is very anxious to obtain forgiveness of his sins. Such gradually, however, sink into their former state of supineness—not because their convictions were not real, but because they failed to apply to the great Mediator. For the encouragement of all who feel the burden of their sins, is the truth of the text stated.

I. THE EVIL TO BE REMOVED.

We know well that there is evil in the world: and we have frequently had to mourn over that evil, as it affects our own particular case. The sin that is in the world is the source of all our evils; and, if we can fully understand the nature of this, we may the better comprehend the value of the remedy provided. The evil to be removed by the blood of Jesus Christ is all sin.

1. *Sin is enslaving.*

Is it not a most clear and awful fact, that men who are subject to the influence of Satan—who are “led captive by the devil at his will,” are in a state of bondage and slavery?

2. *Sin is misery.*

Not only has sin produced all the misery which is to be found in the world—it is misery. The bare fact of having sinned produces misery. It is also associated with misery. It has brought on us the wrath of God—it has exposed us to the vengeance of eternal fire.

3. *Sin is also polluting.*

Man is not only guilty of innumerable transgressions against God, but by these sins his whole nature is corrupted and contaminated. Sin has rendered him altogether impure; it has rendered him unlike his Maker; it has obliterated the image of God; it has reduced him to a state of general degeneracy and pollution; it has corrupted and disordered all his powers.

II. THE REMEDY FOR THIS EVIL.

This remedy has every character that can give it force, and recommend it to our confidence and faith: “The blood of Jesus Christ.” It is impossible to consider the circumstances connected with this remedy, without perceiving its incalculable worth.

1. *The blood of Christ was early prefigured.*

It was early intimated that Christ should appear to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. It was to teach this truth that

Abraham was commanded to offer up his only son—it was to prefigure this, that the passover was appointed—it was in reference to this, that the brazen serpent was elevated—it was to point to this, that the whole Levitical economy was instituted.

2. *The blood of Christ was required by Divine justice.*

Justice required either that the culprit endure the punishment due to his crimes, or that some competent substitute be procured. In the shedding of the blood of Christ we see mercy and truth meeting together; righteousness and peace embracing each other.

3. *The blood of Christ is infinitely meritorious.*

The sins of the world were laid upon him, and he fully atoned for them. This blood has healing virtue. It forms the fountain opened “for sin and uncleanness,”—it is the source of the river that makes glad “the city of God.” Here, then, is a remedy sufficient to supply all the wants of the guilty—a remedy without which your guilt cannot be cancelled, or your salvation secured.

III. THE EFFICACY OF THE REMEDY.

“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” Have you lived long in sin, and have your sins been attended with peculiar aggravations? If you are truly penitent, you need not despair; for this blood “cleanseth from all sin.”

1. *It removes the guilt of sin.*

The guilt of your sins is removed in the very moment of your faith in Christ—in that moment you are justified. “We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins.”

2. *It removes the pollution of sin.*

Christ died not merely to place your sins under restraint, but entirely to eradicate them from your hearts. To wash you white in the blood of the Lamb, is the great design for which the Lamb was slain. Now, this cleansing is as essential to your happiness, as the removal of your guilt. Then come, and wash, and be clean.

M.

CXVI.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

1 JOHN iv. 9.—“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”

The noblest occupation in which the human mind can be engaged, is that of the contemplation of the Divine attributes. The contemplation of an existence that has no commencement and no end—of a mind from which nothing is secret—of a power which nothing can control or withstand—is calculated to impress us with awe. When we meditate on the purity of God, we are abased; on the justice of God, we fear; on his love, our hearts fill with gratitude

and joy. In our text, the love of God is the theme. The apostle maintains—

I. THAT GOD SENDING HIS SON INTO THE WORLD IS THE NOBLEST EXPRESSION OF LOVE TO MAN.

The language of the text is not that of exclusiveness, but that of pre-eminence.

1. *It is not that of exclusiveness.*

He does not mean that this is the only manifestation of the love of God to man. The Divine love is displayed in the creation of man—in the gift of a rational nature, and of an immortal spirit. It is exhibited in this world of ours, the residence which God has provided for man, and also in the arrangements of providence.

2. *It is the language of pre-eminence.*

The loftiest expression of Divine love is found in the gift of his Son.

(1.) *But who is this Son?*

Adam is called the son of God, because he derived his existence immediately from God. Christians are recognised as the sons of God, for God has adopted them. But there is only One who is dignified with the appellation of “only-begotten.” Concerning his nature and character we are not left in uncertainty. The inspired writers ascribe to him all the sacred titles, all the perfections and attributes, which belong to God.

(2.) *Under what circumstances did he come into the world?*

He was sent by the Father, to endure painful humiliation. The first step of his humiliation was the taking upon him of our nature, in its lowest earthly condition. Another step was his submission to death, even “the death of the cross.” The death of Christ was severe, it was one of agony. Witness the deeply-interesting and affecting scene of Gethsemane. Witness the bitter torture and deep distress of Calvary. It was the most amazing death ever endured. Jesus died as man’s substitute. Where will you find another manifestation of love equal to this? Other manifestations cost God nothing—neither augmented nor diminished the Divine fulness; but here God made a sacrifice—the greatest sacrifice infinite love itself could make.

II. THE DESIGN OF GOD IN THE GIFT OF HIS SON.

The life spoken of in the text is not mere existence, for this was not endangered. Annihilation is not included in the curse of the law. It is life in the Divine favour. It includes the full restoration of all we lost by sin; deliverance from the curse incurred, and elevation to glory and happiness. *This life flows through Christ as its meritorious cause.* There was a necessity in the case, that Christ should lay down his life; it was not one of many modes which might have been adopted; it was the only mode adapted to meet the urgencies of the case. According to the teachings of God’s word, this was the only alternative, either

that the Son of God must die, or man perish for ever. Any other supposition would affix a foul blot on the character and government of the Divine Being; would take away from that tenderness with which the love of God to man appears connected; would make him appear any thing but the merciful and gracious Being that he is represented. It is not possible that the God of the Bible would have led his only begotten Son through such dreadful scenes as those of Gethsemane and Calvary, if any other way of saving man were available. *Jesus Christ is the medium through which life flows to us in this world.* From him it will flow in its full perfection to the redeemed in glory, and through eternity he will be adored as its source in songs of grateful praise.

B—M.

CXVII.

A NAME TO LIVE.

REV. III. 1.—“I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”

Many appear to weep for others whose own circumstances demand tears. Some substitute active exertion in the cause of religion for religion itself; they were never experimentally acquainted with the nature of real piety; they never knew the evil of their own hearts; never came to God for pardon. Some who have known the Lord, but who have fallen from grace, nevertheless retain the semblance of piety; they have a name to live.

I. HOW MUCH IS NECESSARY TO HAVE A NAME TO LIVE.

1. *No one can obtain a name to live, that lives in open sin.*

Every one that lives in the open and habitual violation of the law of God, is stamped at once as wicked. The form of godliness can never be claimed, and would never be conceded to any who live in habits of drunkenness, theft, lying, uncleanness, Sabbath-breaking, or such like; of such persons it is usual to say, Oh! they make no profession even.

2. *To have a name to live, it is necessary that we have a kind of faith.*

Entire credence must be given to the revelation of God's will. This faith will include a firm belief of the existence of a God—of the immortality of the soul—of the state of future rewards and punishments. It will also comprehend the doctrine of human guilt—of man's utter helplessness—and of the way of salvation.

3. *To have a name to live, we must have the outward appearance of devotion.*

There must be the form of godliness, including attendance on Christian ordinances and the performance of Christian duties, reading of the word of God, private and family prayer.

II. WHO ARE THEY THAT HAVE A NAME TO LIVE ONLY?

1. *He who is satisfied with a mere form of godliness.*

There are many who teach that mere attention to outward forms is sufficient; there are more who think that God requires no more.

2. *Who have not a clear evidence of their acceptance.*

Religion is a personal thing; it comprehends a present pardon and the assurance of it. God's Spirit gives the assurance—all who have not the witness are destitute of the reality of piety.

3. *Who have no satisfaction or joy in approaching God.*

The truly pious are never so happy as when conversing with their Saviour; their closet is their most favourite spot.

4. *Who are not continually growing in love and holiness.*

True religion is progressive; we are first children, then young men, then fathers—we are exhorted to grow in grace, and to go on till we arrive at the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus.

III. THE FOLLY AND DANGER OF BEING SATISFIED WITH A MERE NAME TO LIVE.

1. *They who have it are never acceptable to God.*

God is satisfied with nothing but the heart—this he demands; and without this he cannot approve of any one's habits and character. Nay, such persons as those now described are loathsome to God; "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

2. *It will never produce real holiness.*

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" There needs in each of you an entire change of nature ere you can form habits of holiness.

3. *It will never make you happy.*

Whatever may be your fancied attainments, you will always have some misgivings as to your real character and condition. True happiness is found only in *real* religion: if you are destitute of this you must be also of that.

4. *It will never fit you for heaven.*

Nothing unholy can enter there. Here you may deceive men as to your real character, but you cannot deceive God. He sees through all your disguises, and he will pronounce your destiny at last according to your real character.

A.

CXVIII.

THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN.

REV. vii. 9, 10.—“After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

This book has many mysteries, mysteries which time only can unravel; it has many predictions, which the events themselves only can explain; but it has also much that may be of service to instruct the Christian in his duty, and to animate and encourage him in his progress through the wilderness. We have, in the text, a view of heaven and its glorious inhabitants.

Let us direct our attention, then,

I. TO THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN.

1. *In their numbers.*

“A great multitude, which no man could number.” A certain class of religionists have, in their dark and contracted notions, limited the design of God, in the work of redemption, to the salvation of a few, while the majority of the race were created for damnation. But such a view receives no support from the Word of God. Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through sufferings, that many sons might be brought to glory. He tasted death “for every man,” that the offer of repentance and remission of sins might be made to all nations, “beginning at Jerusalem.” In our text the result of the mediatorial plan is said to be the salvation of “a multitude, which no man could number.”

2. *In their origin.*

Whence came they? The conquests of the Saviour are from among every people; the triumphs of his grace shall be proclaimed in every tongue. Amongst the redeemed in heaven will be found the barbarian and the civilized, the bond and the free, the learned and the illiterate. The grace of Christ will be found to have subdued the ferocity of the savage, to have overcome the prejudice of the idolater, and to have humbled the pride of the philosopher.

II. THEIR STATE.

It is one,

1. *Of privilege.*

“Stood before the throne, and before the Lamb.”

Once they were afar off, under the curse, without the power or disposition to draw nigh; they were aliens and enemies by wicked works, but they were brought nigh by the blood of Jesus. How different their posture now to what it was on earth! When they came near on earth, it was in the posture of

suppliants to the throne of grace, now they stand before the throne of glory; there they came with fear, trembling, and doubt, now they are filled with holy confidence.

2. *Of purity.*

"Clothed with white robes."

"They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The work begun on earth is now complete. They were satisfied there; they are glorified here. While on earth they were free from sin, but not from infirmity; now they are freed from all. Not only are they holy, but henceforth it is impossible for them to fall. No temptations can now disturb their peace, no sorrows mingle with their joy.

3. *Of triumph.*

"Palms in their hands."

Their earthly history was a warfare. Then they were girded with armour for fight, they had many foes to encounter, and much opposition; but they overcame—the fight is finished, the enemy vanquished, the victory won—they now have palms as the signs of conquest.

III. THEIR EMPLOYMENT.

1. *It is that of gratitude.*

They cry with a loud voice, "Salvation to God and the Lamb." To God and the Lamb they ascribe all the praise of their present glorified condition. The anthem is long and loud, like the noise of many waters. They cry; for they wish the whole universe to hear of the glory of God and the Lamb.

2. *It is continual.*

"They serve him day and night."

Their song is an everlasting song, for the theme is inexhaustible—their song is everlasting—for so is their joy.

Let us learn on earth to win souls to Christ. By this we shall augment the number of the redeemed, and swell the eternal chorus of the skies. Let us seek after the meetness for this inheritance. The work of preparation must be commenced and completed on earth. The robes must be washed on earth. Let us anticipate the services of heaven by joining to sing his praise on earth.

CXIX.

CHRIST THE ALPHA AND OMEGA.

REV. xxi. 6.—“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

The character of a person's religious views and sentiments is regulated by the opinions he entertains of Christ. If his views here are inadequate or erroneous, the consequence will be, that his faith being so, his enjoyments will be so too.

I. THE PECULIAR CHARACTER ASSUMED BY CHRIST.

1. *Consider this character in reference to his personal glories.*
“I am Alpha and Omega.”

These titles are claimed by Christ in several places in this book. In the 8th verse of the 1st chapter their meaning is defined. In Isaiah we have expressions of the very same import respecting God the Father; these ascribe to the Father and the Son the very same attributes.

2. *Consider this character in reference to the relation in which he stands to the covenant of redeeming mercy.*

In what relation does Christ stand to the enjoyments, the gifts, and the blessings of the gospel? A free pardon is offered by him to the guilty, by him provision is made for our adoption and sonship. It is our privilege to be brought back from our wanderings to our Father's house—to have access to God. But it is through Christ. He is the daysman who has laid his hand upon both. He is the great medium of access—the great link that connects man with God, and earth with heaven.

3. *Consider this character in reference to the personal enjoyments and salvation of the believer.*

He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. If we have been made new creatures at all, have we not been made so in Christ Jesus? The work of grace in the soul of man, through every stage of its progress, is a work of grace flowing from God, and flowing through Christ. The personal happiness and enjoyments of the believer flow from Christ. The perseverance of the Christian to the end, is by the continued grace of Christ; and the song of victory at the close of life, when the career is run, the goal reached, the flood passed, is “unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

II. THE PROMISE MADE IN THE TEXT.

This promise is proof of his high character. Who could say that he would give of the river of the water of life but he from whom floweth every good and perfect gift?

By the figure used in the text we are evidently to understand those spiritual blessings, which are the happy consequences of the spiritual life, and pledges of the happiness of heaven. The figure is often used in the Old Testament. "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God." "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." In eastern countries, water is one of the greatest luxuries as well as necessities of life; what a beautiful figure, then, of the riches of salvation! The grace of salvation is a living stream, flowing from the throne of God, through this barren wilderness, to which we are invited to drink and live for ever. These blessings are offered freely. All who will may come. They are bestowed indiscriminately. Any who are athirst may drink. D.

CXX.

NO TEMPLE IN HEAVEN.

REV. xxi. 22.—"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

This book contains a prophecy of the state of the church, from the time in which it was communicated, to the consummation of all things. The chapter from which the text is taken, is, in all probability, considered as a description of the heavenly world.

1. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO POINT OUT THE MEANING AND IMPORT OF THIS DECLARATION.

"I saw no temple therein."

It cannot be intended to insinuate that heaven will not be a state of devotion. It is, in every part of the word of God, represented as a state of the highest and most exalted devotion. The absence of the temple does not denote the absence of devotion; as it is the noblest employment of creatures here, it is impossible to suppose it will be neglected in the heavenly world. Nor is it intended to intimate that there will not be most glorious and supernatural manifestations of God in that state.

1. *A temple is a building set apart exclusively for the honour of God, where he was accustomed to manifest his presence by a visible symbol, in distinction from other places.*

In heaven the presence of God will not be restrained to a particular place; it will diffuse itself every where, in consequence of which the whole will become holy. There will be no part of it consecrated as a local temple, because the whole will be a temple.

2. *A temple is distinguished by having certain services allotted to it, which it is unlawful to perform elsewhere.*

Thus, after the temple at Jerusalem was erected, it became criminal to perform certain rites of worship in any other place. No distinction will subsist betwixt the different mansions in our

heavenly Father's house. As all will be equally holy, the same modes of worship will pervade the whole, and whatever will be suitable to one place will be suitable to all.

3. This declaration is probably intended to intimate, that devotion will no longer form a distinct part of the employment of the heavenly world, but that it will be intimately incorporated with all their actions and sentiments. In the present condition of our being, so many wants arise from the body, so many necessities of a worldly nature to be provided for, that it is but a small part of their time that many can devote to offices of religion. We have two worlds with which we are concerned—the world that now is, and that which is to come; and these give birth to distinct interests—the interests of the body and those of the soul. Truly holy persons employ their hands upon the world, and set their hearts upon heaven; but even these find it difficult, amidst the distractions and cares of the present state, to keep their affections set on the things that are above. Their souls too often cleave unto the dust, and their hearts are sometimes overcharged. Nothing of that nature will be experienced there; "God will be all in all." No wants will there remain to be supplied, no dangers to be averted, no provision to be made for futurity. The contemplation and enjoyment of the Great Eternal will present an ample occupation of the mind for ever and ever.

II. LET US ATTEMPT SOME PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT.

How impossible for undevout persons to be fitted for heaven; how impossible for them to relish its employments or enjoyments! How anxious should we be to improve the seasons of devotion, and the means of grace, as a preparation for heaven! What a well-founded hope of heaven may they indulge, who feel a supreme delight in the exercises of religion! Such are evidently ripening for an invisible and eternal state. Hence we perceive the exact correspondence of the employment of the heavenly world to the taste and disposition of real Christians.

R. H.

THE END.





